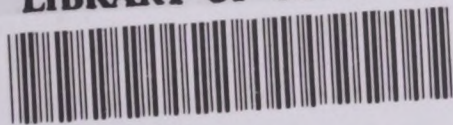


Her Realm



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SHE WAS SOON AT THE ALTAR

HER REALM

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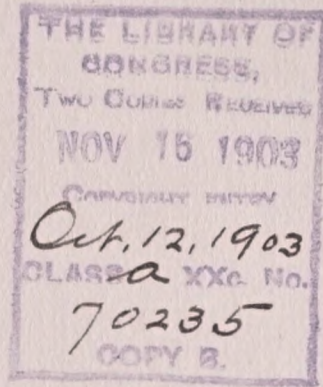
ELLA PERRY PRICE

Author of "The Cry Heard"

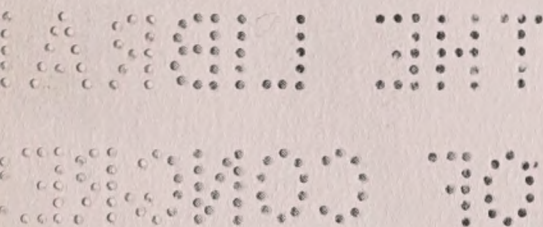


CINCINNATI: JENNINGS AND PYE
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To Motherhood

PREFACE



THAT this book should be written by a missionary in a foreign land may seem incongruous ; but the author began, and nearly completed, the story while still resident in America. Her aim has been to portray an exalted type of womanhood, chiefly renowned for virtuous sons and daughters, in contrast with the mistaken ideals too often cherished ; to recognize those other women who, though not thus privileged, have yet made their lives sublime by self-forgetful ministries ; and to help save young people from the wiles of organized villainy by training them for the highest in character and service. Subsequent observations have only strengthened convictions previously formed, and now presented in the following narrative.

ELLA PERRY PRICE.

RANGOON, BURMA, 1902.

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HER REALM

CHAPTER I

SIREN VOICES

MAPLE GROVE is the scene of varied rural activity. The early sun of a bright May morning falls aslant the upland meadows and pastures, while Lucretia Livingstone in her cool parlor sits sewing a bit of lace in the neck of an exquisite blue and white dimity. She has soft brown hair and eyes, and a pleasant face of refined intelligence; and she puts her needle in and out with the skill of one with much practice and exceptional taste. Near by stands Constance, her youngest child, a maiden of three years, with eager anticipation; for she is the owner of the dress. She can scarcely wait for the last stitch. At length the fluffy robe is finished, and adorns the dainty wearer. Then, her golden ringlets tossing, she flits away through the open door, out upon the green grass under the maples. So airily does she glide, with the wavering sunlight touching her hair and the joy of childhood sandaling her feet, that a whiff of wind seemingly might lift her up with the birds in the branches. Mrs. Livingstone sits in the window, watching the child.

Running in and out among the trees, with outstretched arms, she looks like a bird of paradise. It is a way Constance has, upon donning a new dress, at once to imagine herself a winged creature, and dart away, singing merrily as she goes. This morning the joyous songsters make the air vocal. And she trips lightly over the green lawn to the words:

"Let me fly, says little birdie,
Mother, let me fly away."

"Bless the child!" said Mrs. Livingstone, smiling. She always enjoyed the little girl's fancy, and let her take wing for a while. The flight of the bird over, she came panting back, with cheeks aglow, and eyes larger and bluer than ever.

"I wish I could really fly," she said, "and the birds were calling me. They kept saying, 'Constance, Constance!'"

"'Birdie, rest a little longer,
'Till the little wings are stronger,'"

said mother, kissing her baby, "then perhaps you will fly away." And carefully hanging the pretty gown in the wardrobe, she dressed Constance as usual, and let her go with her brothers and sisters to gather flowers in the woods.

Mrs. Livingstone, however, tarried upon the front porch; for if there is inspiration in surroundings, it certainly could be found at Maple Grove.

A glimmering brook rolled in the morning light, some distance away under the eastern hill. The highway passed along the west of the valley, just at the foot of the hill which rose toward the sunset; while somewhat removed from the road, on a level spot up the side of the slope, stood the house and barns of Maple Grove. At the east of the house and overlooking the valley, towered spreading maples, while from the rear of the buildings the hill continued to reach upward to the old orchard and the grove, and still upward to the level meadows near the top, and to the divide. Up there was that spring which seemed such a wonder in the days of childhood, because it sends its waters to the ocean through both the St. Lawrence River and the Chesapeake Bay, according as the sparkling nectar flows from one side or the other of its small basin.

Thus early in May, and so far to the north, nature was not yet showing her best. Nevertheless, she had beauty. The grass wore a deep green; the air smelled of wild flowers planted by the children under the trees; while the maples, gayly robed in blossoms, and in contrast with the dark hemlocks, gave a glow of warmth to the opposite hillside, not unlike that of autumn. The plowed earth, moist in the recent spring rains, made a rich border to a few early grainfields. The sun, through an occasional parting of the clouds, sent a ray of light chasing across the valley, and up the wood-crowned

hills beyond. An evergreen nodded, and rubbed its branches against the corner of the house. A robin, flitting in the ash-tree at the north, added his note to the song of morning; while a little removed, the hum of machinery in the milkhouse told of the separating of the cream or the turning out of the beautiful golden butter.

At the time of marriage, Mr. and Mrs. Livingstone had chosen to make their home in the country. They saw that intellectual training and real refinement had place on the farm as well as in the city. The raising of crops and the care of cattle were becoming a science. And, besides, the struggle for existence and the sharp competitions were not so deeply felt; conditions were not so cramped. More than this, there were the freedom of the fields in summer, and the long evenings by the fire in winter, that were sure to stamp character as little else would.

Maple Grove had been selected by a former generation as an ideal spot for a home; and Mr. Livingstone did not believe that he could improve upon the choice of his ancestors. The place was three miles from the neighboring village, whose church-spires were plainly visible from the woods above the barn. And on still Sabbath mornings, with the wind blowing up the valley, the soft sound of bells would roll harmoniously along the hillside. Bordering the highway, from this town on the south

to the one several miles north, were frequent homesteads among clustering trees, giving to the whole length of the valley the appearance of a continuation of the village. And though farther back upon the slopes, one might lose himself in the depth of the forest, yet he knew that, within a few steps, he could look out upon many neighboring homes and, in an hour's ride, he could go into the bustling commercial center beyond the village. During these years, Maple Grove had been suited to the varying moods of its occupants, whether they sought the solitude of the woods or the enterprise and activity of the town.

It may be added that, to people of culture like Mr. and Mrs. Livingstone, all that region of country possessed a charm besides the beauty of the hills and the green of the meadows. For in an early day, men had gone up and down the rivers, and had given to the hamlets classic Grecian and Roman names. So that the untutored boys and girls, in small towns far from the railroad, in their first lessons in local geography, were unconsciously perpetuating the fame of the heroes of antiquity—orators, philosophers, and poets—together with historic cities. Besides these, many of Indian origin added their musical sound to the flow of the rivers and the lapping water of the lakes; and, occasionally, one of Dutch descent gave variety to the more sober names of ancient date—a barbarous mixture, no

doubt, and one that has called forth denunciations from some wise pens. Think of it! The poets, Homer, Virgil, and Ovid; the lawgiver, Solon; the orator, Cicero, with Cato, Brutus, Aurelius, and Pompey; the mythical Romulus, Hector, and Ulysses, with the "wary Fabius" and the Carthaginian Hannibal,—all these halo-crowned heroes of the golden past mingling with the half-tutored Oneidas, the Mohawks, the Onondagas, the Senecas, and the Cayugas! An incongruous company, to be sure! But hold! who dares to criticise? Was he born within sight of those hills and valleys, and within sound of those rivers and lakes? From academy windows did he look out upon the trees of a village whose very name sung the praises of earth's greatest ancient singer? If not, let him hold his peace; for he knows not whereof he speaks.

At any rate, to Mrs. Livingstone, there was a decidedly agreeable flavor in this mixing of ancient and modern worthies. What if the new Marathon did lie upon the banks of the Tioughnioga? The situation had in it not only the memory of academy halls and college friendships, but the scent of wild flowers in the forest, and the sound of rippling waters down the dell. In fancy, one could hear the retreating army of Darius upon the Ægean-washed plains of Greece, or the plashing of the oars of a darting canoe upon the Great Lakes. It was the habit of Lucretia Livingstone occasionally to pause

and dwell upon the life that formerly beat about those inland waters, and that greater life that surged upon the blue Mediterranean. It was like poetry to her soul. Living among the hills, she had been shut out from many of the noble activities of woman in the city. With ear attuned to catch the cry of earth's poor, and hand willing to lift burdens from weary shoulders, yet she was surrounded by such fruitful fields, and so far removed from haunts of misery that it would have been easy to believe the whole world well fed and clothed and taught.

Nevertheless, she seemed to hear at times the echo of human woe, and longed to go forth from her home of plenty and comfort to help still the storm. Not always could she complacently pillow her head upon the green slopes when the pitiful moaning of the wind swept about her. Once, years before, when the sigh was too full of pathos, she took by the hand her only child, Lawrence, and silently walked through the lane, across the pasture, up to the woods. Here, beneath the stately maples in the grove, she left him to gather blue, white, and yellow violets, while she followed a green path into the heart of the forest, and there, by a rude stone altar, with a roof of tremulous maple and beech leaves, she quieted for the time the cry to go forth into the world's battles. When she came back to her boy that afternoon, she bore a face of sweetest calm. The half hour at the altar in the woods had done it.

In those days, no other one but her husband knew of the sanctity of that pile of stones. But many a cobble or a slab, were it given a voice, could have told of the occasional coming of a woman into the depths of the wood, sometimes when the sunlight fell through the wavering leaves, sometimes when clouds made the shadows deep; of her tarrying at the foot of the altar, and of her going away with a light in her face that would almost make the path shine. But the voice that called her was hard to still. For she was a woman with a heart. And the voice had so much of suffering in it, that she sometimes felt she must go, and with her own hands carry comfort. Then it was she walked to the woods, where she was able to command herself for the work before her.

The morning she finished the dress for Constance she had just returned from giving some directions in the kitchen, when she heard the roll of wheels along the driveway. Stepping out upon the side porch, she greeted Mrs. Thornton, her former school friend and present social leader in the village, seated in her carriage behind a team of dashing blacks. Assisting Mrs. Thornton to alight, she directed the coachman to the barn. Mrs. Livingstone took her guest into the parlor. As on previous occasions, this woman was impressed with the marked evidences of culture and refinement in that otherwise unpretentious home. She hastily scanned the artis-

tic grouping of pictures upon the walls, and, in the living room, as she came through, a large case of well-selected books. Once in easy-chairs, these two women engaged in animated conversation. For, though in outward conditions somewhat wide apart, they were mutually entertaining, and, in a way, admirers of each other. The summer seldom passed without exchange of visits.

"What a beautiful place this is!" said Mrs. Thornton, glancing through the open door, out upon the lawn quivering with tracery cast by the maple leaves. "I think I might be content to stay here in the summer. But the winter—O-o-o-o!" She shuddered at the very thought of it.

Mrs. Livingstone smiled, but said nothing. There rose before her vision, however, a picture that brought the tears to her eyes. In the family sitting-room she saw seven happy children before the glowing grate, she among them by the lamplight, reading Andersen's "Fairy Tales" or "Swiss Family Robinson," and closing with something from the Book of books. And the comfort within was made surer by the hollow roaring of the wind upon the hilltops, and the sifting of the snow through the bare branches of the maples. But she let the vision pass and turned to her friend.

"Where are Margaret and Horace?"

"There was not time for the nurse to dress them."

"The ride would have done them good."

"Yes, but the club gives a banquet to-night at Mrs. Spencer's, and I am on the committee, and ought not to have driven up this morning. Bringing the children was out of the question. Besides, I have to respond to a toast on 'Woman's Perplexities.' "

Mrs. Livingstone wanted to sigh, but she had better manners. She only said: "I wish you had brought the children as they were."

Just then two pairs of bright eyes peered above the window-sill, and two arms reached through with bunches of myrtle and squirrel corn, and two voices said:

"We 'give you the flowers through the window, for the door's such a long way round.' "

Mrs. Livingstone kissed the upturned faces, and took the bouquets, then away flew Mary and Constance as fast as feet of five and three summers could carry them. Mrs. Thornton could not help thinking somewhat regretfully of a little boy and girl who had begged for a ride with mamma that delicious spring morning. But she soon dismissed the thought, for she had other business.

"Mrs. Livingstone, I drove out to see if I could not persuade you to join our club. The ladies are very anxious to have you." There was no reply, and Mrs. Thornton went on: "You have such gifts, you could help us greatly. Besides, you would en-

joy the change. You owe it to yourself and to society, and to your children as well. I would not, for the world, be without the refining influence of club life upon my home."

"Indeed?" said Mrs. Livingstone.

"Certainly I would not. It brings to woman a love not confined to home and Church. It is exerting an incalculable influence, and has set in motion forces that are to revolutionize the world."

"I think that is true," said Mrs. Livingstone, thoughtfully.

"It has put me into such a genial atmosphere," continued her guest, "and has given me such appreciation that it has roused all the best there is in me. I enjoy a larger life than ever I did before. Nothing else could have given me such aspirations."

Mrs. Livingstone recalled the sorority friendships of her college days, and understood the meaning of Mrs. Thornton's words. But she thought of the green path through the woods to the altar, and of her children gathering flowers in the grove; and she wondered if anything else could have given her such aspirations. Then she thought of the man who, during these years, had so loyally walked beside her; and she wondered who else could have given her such appreciation.

"I admit much that you say," at length answered Mrs. Livingstone. "There are many discouraged, lonely women, who find great inspiration and strength

in the life of which you speak. To such the club must come as a beam of light. But to some I think it comes as a siren voice. It is sweet to hear, this calling us to uplifting associations and to possibilities of cheering dreary women on their way. It is a voice that any woman of spirit would gladly heed. But some of us have not that privilege."

"Certainly, you are not of that class," replied Mrs. Thornton. "You might appropriately improve this opportunity."

"Not without disregarding something far more important."

"I can not understand you," said her guest. "What could be of so much greater worth than the developing of one's own gifts, and enriching life for other women?"

"That work is noble," said Mrs. Livingstone. "But just now, I am not at liberty to undertake it. I must leave it to those who feel themselves called to such endeavor."

Further she did not care to particularize to a woman who lightly considered the responsibility to childhood, and soon turned the conversation to subjects of mutual understanding and interest. At length, Mrs. Thornton's time being limited, she ordered her carriage and bade Mrs. Livingstone good-morning.

As she rode along the highway, she turned to

look up again at the white house behind the maples. She thought of the woman there, and how, in school-days, she was admired for her elocution and her rhetoric, and how one of the professors had urged her to become a public speaker; for she had a good voice and a forceful way of putting her ideas. She would have had a brilliant career if she had so chosen.

Then certain uncomfortable suggestions concerning her own children came to her mind, and prompted her to urge the driver to greater speed.

For the next twenty minutes, two black beauties carried this cultured and progressive woman past the farmhouses, over the bridges, and under the trees, with unusual swiftness. Some looked from their windows at the passing equipage with great admiration and a certain degree of envy for the woman thus favored by fortune.

Shortly she drove in at the side entrance of one of the most imposing dwellings in the village. It was a square, old-fashioned, but stately house, whose very proportions were classic. Even the trees in the yard had an aristocratic pose. It was, however, a charming place. And not far away to the east murmured the waters of the beautiful Tioughnioga. Mrs. Thornton hastily alighted. Margaret stood rather disconsolately in the doorway.

"Where is Horace?" said her mother, hurriedly.

"I do n't know," said the child. "He just won't stay here when you are away. I tried to amuse him, but he would go."

Then the nurse and the servant were questioned in turn, but neither could tell where the little vagrant might be. He was only five, but he had developed some very unenviable traits. He had a sweet, childish face that one could not help loving. And he had snapping black eyes, but not such as could be trusted. Other mothers had learned to know that when they saw Horace coming, they must carefully guard their own children. Mrs. Thornton declared she could not keep him at home. He would run off to play across the street. But the neighbors noticed that when there was diphtheria near by, she kept him at home for three months.

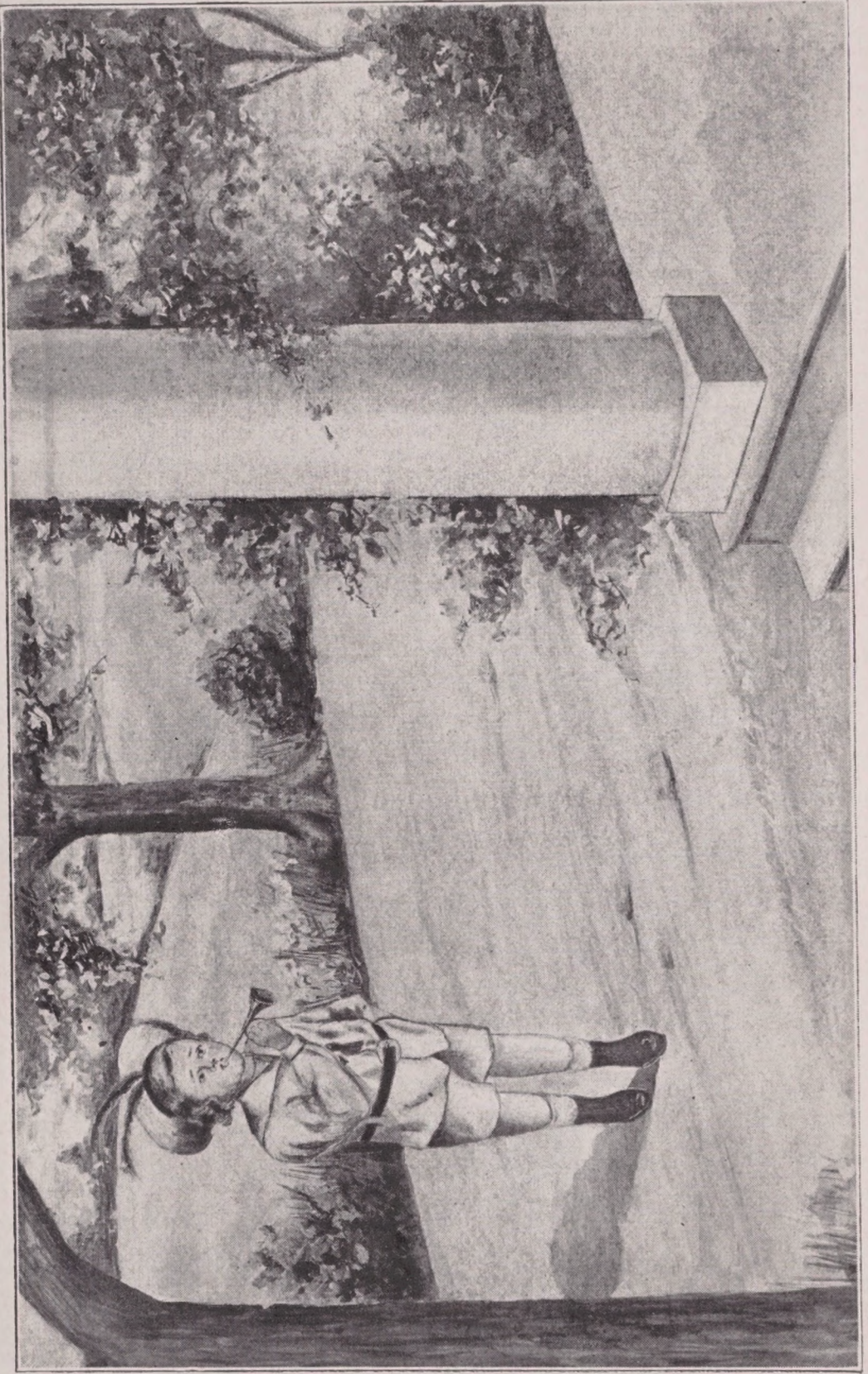
She had scarcely driven away that morning when Horace was missing, and had not been seen since. A search was ordered at once. The coachman was to look in the barn, the nurse was to hurry to the grocery, Margaret was to go over to Mrs. Denham's, while Mrs. Thornton herself stood by the front gate calling:

"Horace, Horace!"

It was a call with which all the neighbors were familiar, and one that made their hearts sick for the prophecy in it.

"Horace!"

Soon the culprit emerged from the rear of Mrs.



HE WAS LUSTILY TOOTING

Denham's, his face streaked with dust, feathers in his cap, and a horn in his mouth, upon which he was lustily tooting. Mrs. Thornton was annoyed. She gave him a little shaking as he came through the gate, not enough to hurt him or do him any good, but simply to give vent to her own vexation, and hurried him off to the nurse to be dressed for lunch. She had not time for any more emphatic reprimand; for there was that reception, and she must complete her response to the toast, "Woman's Perplexities." They seemed great just then.

CHAPTER II

TWO CROWNINGS

HAVING given strict orders not to be interrupted, Mrs. Thornton went to her room, opened the desk, and took out her writing, which she had nearly finished, and had judged very good. But she was somewhat disturbed by the recent episode with Horace, and looked upon her work with less satisfaction. She managed, however, to put down any disquieting thoughts, and set herself energetically to complete her task; for the hours were passing, and she must be ready. In the middle of the afternoon, eluding the children, she slipped out at the side door, to learn the progress of the committee at Mrs. Spencer's. She made some needed suggestions with regard to decorations and the serving of refreshments, and, when sure that everything would be in proper form, hastily returned to dress for the evening. She actually begrudged the time necessary to eat dinner with her family. As for strolling with Margaret and Horace through the flower-garden afterward, that was not to be thought

of. When Horace, in a fit of desperation, broke away from the nurse, and, against her earnest entreaties, fled precipitately over the grass plot, into the kitchen, and up the stairs to his mother's room, with a bouquet of velvety pansies, she hastily put him out, with the rather sharp declaration: "I can not be bothered now. I must leave in a few minutes." She even omitted to kiss the little fellow for his love token. With a somewhat sullen air he turned and walked away, muttering sentiments quite natural under the circumstances, and yet not at all respectful in one of his years. Mrs. Thornton could not help hearing his words, but she had not time to notice them. Then, too, she was conscious of having herself provoked the boy's indignation; and she let the occasion pass.

Nothing went wrong, however, with the arrangements for the reception. All the time necessary for their completion was given. And when, at the last minute, one of the ladies came in for further details concerning the salads, Mrs. Thornton unhesitatingly invited her up-stairs, and graciously gave her all the information desired. In reply to an apology for coming at so late an hour, she hastened to say: "O pray do not mention it. I have an abundance of time. Then we could not have anything go amiss to-night. I am glad you stopped."

Fortunately Horace did not hear this conversation. If he had, and had been old enough to appre-

ciate its inconsistency, he probably would have been more rebellious than ever.

Thanks to a few women like Mrs. Thornton, Mrs. Spencer's home that evening was a vision of loveliness. Not a detail was lacking. The lights, the club colors of white and purple, the orchestra behind a screen of palms in the upper hall, the profusion of potted plants—all were arranged with such harmonious effect as to satisfy the most exacting.

At the appointed hour the rooms began to fill with intelligent and well-dressed ladies, a few of whom were guests from a city club, and all were liberal in expressions of praise. Mrs. Thornton herself had never looked handsomer. When she swept into the reception-hall, to the soothing music of her own rustling silks, and within the halo of her brilliant diamonds, she was an object of favorable comment by all present. Strangers made haste to inquire, "Who is that elegant lady?" and, upon being introduced, hovered as near as propriety admitted; for she was decidedly the most popular woman there and a captivating conversationalist. Then something in the flash of her black eyes held people. She always gathered a group of listeners. The club was proud of her, for her success meant theirs. And there were whisperings among them that she might some day preside at the State Federation. Echoes of this prediction reached Mrs. Thornton's ears. and made her more determined

than ever to achieve victory. Her response to the toast was a great triumph, and won the most hearty applause. She had her crowning that night; and she wore her laurels with dignity and extreme self-complacency. Amid smiles and congratulations the evening wore on till a late hour. Then closed a year declared by all to have been one of much intellectual advancement and social privilege.

As Mrs. Thornton stepped upon the front porch of her own home she turned to let the night air cool her flushed face. So constantly had she been engaged of late with society matters that she scarcely gave herself time to dwell upon the charms of her quiet village that slept peacefully in the pale moonlight. Not a sound broke the stillness, save the faint ripple of the water in the river under the hill. For some minutes she paused, listening to its sweet and gentle music, and needing something to calm her excitement. Yet she could not help thinking of what had come to her that night, and feeling the joy of a woman who has won public favor. She had gained what she sought, and was pleased. Again within the walls of her home, however, except for the dim light in the drawing-room, everything was oppressively solemn. No one was there to greet her. The children and their nurse long before were in dreamland. Her husband had come an hour previous from the office, where he had been poring over a trying case, and, not finding his wife, had

gone to his room. She sank into the depths of a chair, too tired to remove her gloves, and would have fallen asleep but for weariness.

Then, for the first time since her return from Mrs. Livingstone's, she gave serious thought to Horace and Margaret. They had begged to go with her that morning into the country, but she could not wait for them. Later in the day they had wanted a story, but she had so many plans for the reception that she could scarcely give them a minute during all its long hours. She also recalled, with painful sensations, her unwarranted dismissal of Horace and his pansies, and, for a moment, contrasted the scene with that of Mrs. Livingstone's acceptance of wild flowers from Mary and Constance. At night, too, her children had cried when she went away; but she had an engagement; and until she turned out at the gate she could hear their sobs. All this was not a very pleasant reflection, to say the least. And it removed some of the glamour of the evening. Yet, after all, was she not making an honest effort to supply the needs of her children? Why should she spend her time with them when the nurse could do as well? It gave her opportunity for larger development. And it seemed such small work for a woman of her capacity and influence to be absorbed in the care of two children. In these days of woman's expanding powers it was altogether out of the question. How otherwise could she have become au-

thority upon Shakespeare? How could she have fathomed the depths of Browning, or have studied the old masters? Then there was that comprehensive paper read at the State Federation last November in New York City, on "Methods of Opening a Child's Eyes to the Beauties of Nature." She could not have written it without days of reading and investigation. There was no time for mending broken toys, bathing bruised heads, and reading fairy stories, much less for excursions to the country in search of golden-rod and immortelle. Some one else was paid for entertaining her children. Besides, her conscience would not let her use so much time for her own improvement, without taking some for Church and charitable purposes. So that two afternoons and one evening of the week were regularly thus employed. She was the president of the Mothers' Meeting, and absolutely indispensable to its success.

Another reason why she felt justified in being so much from home was the fact that her husband did not spend his evenings there. But did she reflect that she was the first to mar the charm of domestic life by a multiplicity of outside engagements? During the early years of their married life he made it a point to stay with his wife and babies, unless sharing with her a social gathering. But when he habitually saw her dressing to go, he found little delight at his own fireside. Conse-

quently, he soon had work at the office demanding his attention. But Mrs. Thornton had failed to see how she was in any way responsible for a decline in his appreciation of home. So she quieted any chiding of her own conscience, by casting the blame on her husband. Thus musing, she fell asleep, and did not waken till the chimes in the hall struck two. Then she arose and slowly dragged herself up-stairs. Margaret and Horace were sweetly sleeping in snow-white beds. She stooped and kissed each pretty mouth. But the nurse had carefully washed all traces of sorrow from their cheeks. At length, Mrs. Thornton herself slept.

It is a week later. Some mystery is in the air this morning at Maple Grove. A council is called in the grape arbor south of the woodhouse. Lawrence is in the chair. Mary stands guard against the approach of any outsider, for the session is a secret one. The necessary business is soon transacted, however, and the members emerge from their hiding-place. Presently, with baskets on their arms, they scurry away to the woods, and, for an hour, silence reigns about the house. Mrs. Livingstone, surprised by the sudden stillness, comes out for an explanation. Across the entrance to the leafless arbor hangs a curtain, upon which, in large letters, is the word "Closed." She understands that she is not to be admitted. Then, looking beyond the barns,

she espies seven children wending their way single file up the hill toward the grove, their faithful dog, Victor, leading the way. She smiles, and turns to enter the house, when she sees in a box, nailed by the door for the reception of love-letters between herself and children, a note addressed in Charlotte's hand: It read as follows:

"Coronation of Queen Dewdrop at four o'clock. Be sure to come. Please answer.

"SEVEN LOYAL SUBJECTS."

Mrs. Livingstone went back to her work. But first she opened her desk and answered the note, gladly accepting the invitation. This answering of missives took no little time, but she never neglected them. After a while she heard voices in the distance, and, presently, sounds of activity in the arbor; but she kept away. Yet she could not help catching sight of chairs, flags, and vases hurried out onto the side porch, and, now and then, hearing subdued laughter or faint ejaculations. She appeared utterly non-observant, however. After an unusually bold excursion into the sitting-room, when they came back with her easy-chair, a council was again summoned for serious consideration. Mother had a caller in the parlor, and Norman and Leroy both declared they heard her say she would be at Aunt Martha's at four o'clock.

"She could n't have meant to-day," said Lilian.

"I know she said something about another engagement," chimed in Mary.

"Good for you, my Highland lassie," said Lawrence.

Then a bright idea popped into Constance's head, and she disappeared outside the curtain, returning with a letter from the post-box. In their excitement they had forgotten to look for an answer to the note. Norman, the secretary of the council, read as follows:

"MY DEAR DEVOTED SUBJECTS,—I gladly accept your invitation to the coronation of Queen Dewdrop at four o'clock this afternoon. Nothing ordinary will prevent my coming.

"YOUR FAITHFUL QUEEN."

"That settles it," continued Norman. "Unless somebody's sick or dying, she'll be here. And if she can't come, she'll write."

So they watched the departure of the guest, and kept an eye on the box. But no contradictory message came. And they heartily resumed preparations. By three o'clock everything was to their liking, but still carefully concealed. Then there were hurrying footsteps up the stairs, and the closing of doors, as the children repaired to their various rooms. After three-quarters of an hour they came tiptoeing

down, freshly arrayed, to complete exterior decorations. Matting was laid along the porch from the dining-room door to the arbor entrance. Seven-year-old Leroy and his younger sister Mary took from within the arbor a basket of maple blossoms and leaves, and strewed them on the matting, as a passage for the queen. Charlotte looped the curtains. All was ready. At exactly four, a small silver bell tinkled, and Mrs. Livingstone appeared, Constance ahead carrying a basket of blue violets, from which she dropped blossoms along the path. On either side of the entrance to the arbor, stood Norman and Leroy, who, with soldierly dignity, lifted their caps as the queen passed. Just within, Lawrence and Charlotte stepped aside to let the honored personage by. At the farther end of the arbor, which was also curtained from the rays of the sun, stood Lilian and Mary at either side of their mother's easy-chair, which was literally transformed by old silk draperies and flower festoons of blue and white violets. Upon this throne the queen was seated. Then Lilian placed a crown of myrtle leaves upon her head, and Mary a wand trimmed with myrtle blossoms in her hand. On a small table at the left stood a vase of white trillium, one of pepper-root, and another of red bainberry. Hemlock branches were intended to close the open sides of the arbor, while twigs of maple and silver birch, with a coloring of yellow violets, formed an un-

certain roof over their heads. On a stand at her right were plates of water bordered with a few tender ferns, and sailing tiny geranium-leaf boats, covered with sparkling drops of water; for Constance would have dewdrops somewhere.

The queen lifted her wand, and all her subjects stood before her. She lowered it, and all sat upon the rug at her feet. Then she told a story, such as no one else could tell. She peopled a beautiful landscape with wonderful inhabitants. She strolled through winding lanes, over green fields, and into deep forests. She gathered bright flowers, and listened to sweet songsters, and rested in shadowy coolness upon the banks of a brimming river. She made paths among the stars, and wandered with her children there. Finally she led them up to a great white throne, where they were all crowned. Then, after a pause and a movement of the wand, the silver bell sounded, and the ceremony was over.

"O," said Constance, whose eyes had fairly blazed with eager interest, "why could n't we stay by that throne?" They could not see, in those days, how they were being continually held there.

It is half-past eight. Deep shadows dim the hills. Pale stars peep out from the blue. The crickets and frogs sing their song to the night. The children's voices are hushed. Mrs. Livingstone has just gone the rounds of each snowy bed to whisper

love to the precious occupants, and to hear the sweetest words, "I love you, mother." Now she sits with her husband in the family room, talking over some matters of interest about the farm. Her myrtle crown hangs on a twig in the arbor. But she is crowned; yes, she is crowned!

CHAPTER III

“HARD TO FIND”

“HARD to find,—a clean, upright, industrious young man.” Mrs. Livingstone read these words from the pen of a successful merchant, as she sat resting, one warm July morning, by her parlor window. She was startled. Of course, from her own observation and reading, she knew of the alarming errancy among young men. She knew of the frightful havoc of vicious habits, even among boys. She knew of drunkenness, poverty, and insanity; of the frequent bank defalcations, the plunder of private homes, the holding up of railway trains, and the consequent crowds within prison walls; and often their sad eyes peering from behind the bars had haunted her dreams at night. Yet never before had the situation been put to her with the tragic force of those few words. What could the Christian mothers of this land be doing? And she looked with loving solicitude out upon a group of happy boys and girls in the sand-pile under the shade of the maples. Charlotte’s Ruth Marion Dorothy Grace Livingstone sat in a doll-carriage near by, the most

correctly-behaved child of the company. The sand had been molded into landscapes, with rivers, lakes, mountains, valleys, railroads, and cities. From her parlor window she watched the golden and raven locks flit by, and saw the bright eyes sparkle, and listened to the peals of childish laughter from rosy lips, or heard the cries of dismay over some mountain avalanche or undermined railway. And she smiled or looked serious according to the promptings of her own thoughts. That morning, sheltered by the outstretched arms of the maples and watched over by tireless love, her children were comparatively safe. But the day would come, and that not many years hence, when her boys would be of those among whom it is “hard to find a clean, upright, industrious young man.” Somehow, just then, the thought was not altogether quieting. What a weight of responsibility it threw upon her as a mother! There must be no temporizing. Now was her opportunity. Once gone, it would never return. To fulfill her obligations, however, she was willing to make all the personal sacrifices necessary. Indeed, it became an unspeakable privilege, in comparison with which, social position, and even intellectual development, had little attraction. If fidelity to her trust would avert the disastrous consequences so often seen in young men and women, gladly would she pay the cost.

Reflecting thus, she again took up her reading.

But often she would lift her eyes from the page for a glance at the brood in the sand, as though she feared the swooping upon them of some bird of prey; for she knew that the vultures threatened her birdlings as well as those of other mothers, and that only the most careful guarding of the nest would prevent the ruin of its occupants.

Presently her meditations were interrupted by a footfall on the front porch. And she arose to greet two young ladies from the city, Miss Jennings and Mrs. Harris, who had come out for a day's rest, and would return at night. After seating her guests and exchanging courtesies, with more particular inquiries concerning mutual friends and acquaintances, the conversation drifted to the children outside.

"What a flock of them!" said Miss Jennings. "And think of having to care for this home! O, I shall never marry! I wouldn't keep house for love or money."

"I've been married three years," said Mrs. Harris, "and haven't kept house, and I never mean to do it. I have no responsibility whatever."

"But what if there were children?" said Mrs. Livingstone.

"O, I am determined never to have any children," said Mrs. Harris. "They are too much care and expense. Then all the worry and confusion, and

no time to one's self! When can you ever do any thinking?"

Mrs. Livingstone smiled. "At the best, I consider my thoughts not worth much; but they certainly are better because of the children."

Mrs. Harris failed to appreciate Mrs. Livingstone's remark, and rattled on.

"All my married friends are of the same opinion. Some of them live in great apartment-houses in New York, and simply could not stand any more outlay."

"They should move, then," ventured Mrs. Livingstone, "into less extravagant surroundings. Simpler living would solve many problems."

"But most people are in for a good time," said Miss Jennings.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Harris, "and they will have it, too, no matter what it costs."

And so these girlish women chitter-chattered for two long hours, until Mrs. Livingstone excused herself to superintend the preparation for dinner. They thought they were enjoying life to its full, and, though they would not have said it before her, they really felt a sort of pity for Mrs. Livingstone. With all their pity, however, they found her home a delightful place to visit, and, in many a spin on their wheels, had fixed their destination at Maple Grove. There was something in the abundance of

rich cream, in the constantly-flowing spring-water, in the luxuriant shade, and, if they only knew it, much more in the calm and strength and sweetness of this self-possessed woman, that drew them, now and then, away from the heat and noise and endless engagements of the city. They found this day, as on other occasions, full of wholesome rest and pleasure. Evidently, they were disposed to prolong the stay to its utmost limit. For it was past the middle of the afternoon, when, being much refreshed, they reluctantly arose to go. Walking leisurely down the drive to the highway, they headed their wheels south, and set out upon the return, keeping the course in silence for three miles, until they reached the village, when they turned directly north, following the cinder path up the valley toward the city. This cinder path is on what used to be the old plank road, which carried traffic between the towns in the days before the railroad. Many a man born since the advent of the railroad can still remember the planks through the main street, and with what aristocratic pride he used to hear the wheels of his father's carriage roll over them. What contemptuous pity he would feel for the unfortunate boy, whose father chose the dirt road! But the planks have long been gone, for the electric cars have made their sacrilegious entrance into the classic village; and cars are always democratic.

These young ladies wheeled up the valley that

afternoon intent upon a good spin, little caring for the historic associations of the Tioughnioga. They were unmoved by thought of the heroic woman who, a century ago, for six long weeks the only inhabitant of the village, had braved the drifting snow and the howling wolves. Yet they must have spun right past where her defenseless home had stood. Nor did these wheelwomen care for the legend of the valley; the capture of the Indian maiden, Altahalah; the fruitless search by braves, headed by Ke-no-tah, her lover; the departure of the red men from the Tioughnioga; and, finally, the gathering of the shades of evening; the reclining of Altahalah upon the banks of her “native river,” chanting “the favorite air of her noble brave;” then the lowering clouds, the “rumbling thunder,” the leaping lightning, the torrents of rain, the passing of the storm, the plashing of oars, the gliding of a canoe, and, after long years of separation, the joyous meeting of Altahalah and Ke-no-tah. Miss Jennings and Mrs. Harris had no ear to catch the echoes of this beautiful tradition. They were out for a spin.

Yet if Mrs. Livingstone had been along that river, the falling water and the lengthening shadows would have sung the whole mysterious story into her soul. She would have seen the night grow dark, heard the wind rage and felt the storm “gathering about the Great Lakes.” Then she would have beheld Ke-no-tah “nerve his right arm to crush the

destroyer," until in fancy she would have followed an Indian trail, or sat about the council fire to the northward. Not so with these practical young ladies. They had covered ten miles before once looking at the hills. And as for the Red Man that, years before, upon the highest peak, defended his wigwam from the prowling wolves, they never even thought of him. Having neared the lakes midway of their journey, they dismounted to rest under the shade of a tree.

"My, this is hot!" said Miss Jennings.

"Well, I should think so!" said Mrs. Harris, drying the perspiration from her face, and fanning herself with her hat.

"Do you know," said her friend, after a pause, "that Mrs. Livingstone is a remarkable woman?"

"Indeed, she is," was the reply. "How she could be content to spend her days so quietly, with those children for almost her sole companions, I do not see."

"If she were in the city," replied Miss Jennings, "she could hold any place she might choose. She is a charming talker. I have heard people say that when she was in college she had promise of an enviable reputation. But out there on that dairy farm I should like to know who is to be benefited by her accomplishments."

"Those seven children, no doubt," laughed Mrs. Harris. "But she is welcome to that circumscribed

life. For my part, I want my influence to go farther than a single hillside and seven youngsters.”

Miss Jennings assented to what her friend had said, and, being revived, they wheeled on, fixing their attention once more upon the cinder path and their own increasing speed, and losing sight altogether of the forest-covered hills.

Scarcely had Mrs. Livingstone dismissed the two young ladies that afternoon, when she was called to the door by the arrival of Rev. Mr. Long and wife, out from the village for a pastoral call. They were delightful people, and their coming always gave Mrs. Livingstone a glimpse of the outside world altogether stimulating. She was not confining her influence to that hillside in those strong, energetic years of her life, because she felt no inclination to go elsewhere. That altar in the woods could otherwise testify. Indeed, as before indicated, she had a passion for the world in its need that became at times almost unbearable. So when some one came with a report of its doings she felt consoled by the fact that others were privileged to respond to its sorrowing cry. The coming of Mr. and Mrs. Long just at this time was peculiarly fortunate, for the visit of Miss Jennings and Mrs. Harris had been a trifle disquieting, and had left Mrs. Livingstone in a mood to appreciate the company of sympathetic friends, such as the minister and his wife had invariably proven themselves. But some-

how, whether Mrs. Livingstone's frame of mind was at fault, or the preacher and his wife were less responsive than usual, they failed to impart any comforting influence. The truth is, Mrs. Livingstone's home had been such a place of rest to the busy pastor that he had usually come to receive help rather than give it. So to-day he did not anticipate any need of bringing consolation, and was not on the lookout for opportunities of that kind. At any rate, a good deal had come across Mrs. Livingstone's path of late to make her feel that the world in general, and some of her friends in particular, regarded a woman with children as occupying an exceedingly limited and unimportant place. So she was not altogether prepared for peaceful resistance, when, in the course of the conversation, Mr. Long remarked:

"Mrs. Livingstone, it seems a little unfortunate that a woman of your capacity should not be able to do more Church work."

Her dark eyes flashed. How could he say it? But she commanded herself, and, pointing to her boys out in the grainfield with their father, said calmly: "There is my Church work."

He saw at once that he had made a mistake, but he foolishly thought that by going on he could mend matters.

"I ought not to have mentioned it, but I was

thinking of the many children that never knew of a mother's care."

Did she not often think of it? And had not that thought, like a spectral presence, often shadowed her footsteps over those hills, until she settled it once more at the altar under the trees? For it was never an all-satisfying comfort that her own were safe. Some mother's own were out in the cold, with the wolves on their track; and days when hers seemed dearest, the pathos of human suffering seemed the most real.

"But your competent help," continued the preacher, rather blindly—for he was getting in deeper and deeper—"would enable you to do what you could not otherwise accomplish."

"Certainly, but I keep help that I may have strength to give my best to my family. When Mr. Livingstone and the boys come in, it is always, 'Where is mother?' Often the sound of my voice is all they want. They turn, and go out satisfied."

She had not meant to say so much, for she abominated the habit of attempting to justify one's conduct. She admired the man or woman who, seeing duty, had the courage to do it, without regard to the comments of others. Her conscience was very exacting. She could not help doing as she did, and she was not seeking for commendation. But Mr. Long's remarks, just at that time, provoked her

to rather unusual vehemence. Happily for all concerned, a boy's merry whistle was heard from the meadow, and, sooner than seemed credible, Leroy burst somewhat unceremoniously into the parlor, with his hat in one hand and a bunch of evening primroses in the other. Barely nodding to Mr. and Mrs. Long, in his eagerness, he laid the flowers in his mother's lap, saying: "These are for you, or you may call them yours. They are yours and mine together." For he liked to be in partnership with her. Then, bowing himself out, he whistled to Victor, and was off for the cows. The conversation turned upon more profitable topics, and a delicious country supper apparently covered over the previous unhappy remarks.

Soon after, Mr. and Mrs. Long drove back to town. But woe to Mrs. Livingstone! No sooner had she lost sight of her departing guests than she saw the slowly-approaching figure of Mrs. Miffin. Under the most favorable circumstances it took a large stock of grace to be hospitable to this neighborhood gossip. Her royal highness lived a mile and a half away, and occasionally walked over to air her opinions. Although not possessed of much wealth, she had more than many others of her station, having several thousands in bank. Hence she was authority on economy, and the very last one on the road to give to a case of need. Fifteen cents to help replace a widow's barn, after its de-

struction by lightning, was considered a liberal donation. Mrs. Miffin had no children. Consequently, she possessed invaluable rules for their management, and, in season and out of season, attempted to enlighten other women. She was a most emphatic exponent of the general law that one's knowledge upon this subject varies inversely with her experience. Even upon ordinary occasions, she carried her head full of neighborly news items. Her statements were equally positive, whether the facts were true or false. To-day, however, she had been calling in the village, and wishing, as was her custom, to discuss the latest rumors, so announced to Mrs. Livingstone. Whereupon that woman became utterly noncommunicative, for she always felt that it was casting "pearls before swine" to speak her convictions to this intruder. So she merely nodded and smiled at her neighbor's thrusts until she must have given an impression of unusual stupidity; for in an incredibly short time Mrs. Miffin left.

At that moment Mr. Livingstone drove from the barn with his beautiful bays. He was going over the western hill to engage help for harvest, and would take the children for a ride. Mary clapped her hands with glee; for she liked to see the "lightning-bugs" that made the hollows twinkle. Mrs. Livingstone watched them as they turned up the hill. Then, directing some preparations for the morrow, she set forth, climbing the same slope, but

her path was through the pasture, toward her favorite retreat. Just as she entered the grove, they were passing under the old pine tree up the road. She paused to look back upon the valley, and, in the distance, the village by the river. She could distinguish the old church, with its spire pointing heavenward. The church! How she loved it, and all the good work it was doing in the world! She was praying for it, and freely contributing of her substance. All she was holding back just now was her time, of which she was giving only a limited amount. At least, so it appeared to outsiders. Even that day she had been pitied by some and censured by others. She knew, too, the theory of many well-meaning people, that wherever there is a weak place in this world, woman must come to strengthen it, wherever a foul place, woman must come to purify, and so extend her influence to business and politics. Not very much appreciation was shown for the unprogressive woman who chose the old paths. What about the weak places? If it was so hard to find a reliable young man, where was the difficulty? Was it altogether in the temptation of business life, in the enormities of the liquor-traffic, or in the corruptions of politics? Mrs. Livingstone was now looking with yearning eyes out over those slopes and down the valley to the village. The shadows were already creeping up the opposite hillside. Everything was so still and beautiful! There

seemed no place for sin in all that lovely valley. Yet she knew it was there. She could point to this housetop and that under which lurked hideous skeletons. And yet in those homes were fathers and mothers who were "corner-stones" and "pillars" underneath yonder church-tower. Think of it! That tall spire making its mute appeal to inmates of such homes! Was it strange that not many young men ever crossed the village green in response to its pleading? Where, O where, was the one weak place in the world's make-up? To Mrs. Livingstone the answer was evident. If over every Christian home there could preside a woman, with faith and courage to any limit, for the building of character in her boys and girls, a large part of the missionary training and temperance work of the Church would then be accomplished. However, she would not minify the heroic endeavor of those self-sacrificing women who had sought to patch the broken image of manhood. Rather would she magnify the importance of molding plastic clay, and honor the woman who loyally guarded beginnings.

Mrs. Livingstone turned her footsteps into the woods. She was soon at the altar, under branches high and arched and intertwined, leaving an open space beneath like the interior of a cathedral, with an outlook toward the west. Here she paused, gazing across the sloping meadow beyond, to the western sky all aflame with golden glory. She

thought of the precious load riding that evening toward the sunset, and her heart took courage.

"I am right, I am right," she said, and the woods heard her. "I can not make others understand it. But God knows. And it may be that the world will sometimes know that a woman, in the years gone by, had conviction enough to close her heart to its glittering hopes and opportunities, and throw the strength of her love into the quiet but far-reaching work of planting within her own children the image of Him who walked in Galilee."

She was sure that thus she could best serve the world; and the trees that night, and the chirping birds, and the chattering squirrels understood her.

The glow in the west had become faint when she emerged again from the woods. The hills were darkening with purple shadows. The stars one by one were lighting the blue above. The wind was singing low and sweet its wondrous song among the corn leaves, as Mrs. Livingstone, with that song in her heart, walked lightly through the sleek herd of cows, resting in the orchard, and she was glad. Listening, she heard a voice above the corn: "See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount."

CHAPTER IV

TENDER HOPES

FROM her altar in the woods, that summer night, Lucretia Livingstone carried in her soul something of the glory of the sunset. And after that she molded the clay even more tenderly, and followed the "pattern" a little more carefully. Often in the long winter evenings, when the lessons had been learned, she would sit reading "Hiawatha," "Enoch Arden," or "Evangeline" to her audience of seven eager listeners, as she alone knew how to read. And the music of her voice would hold every eye upon her. Even Constance was fascinated by the rhythmical flow of the words. Sometimes the pathos of the story would roll out full and deep under her matchless interpretation. On such occasions Mr. Livingstone would listen until his heart was breaking, then rise and leave the room. One evening when the cadence of her voice had been unusually tender, he interrupted long enough to say: "You will never do a greater work than this." Then he put on his coat and cap and went out into the night. The air was cold. The snow, white and

still, enshrouded the sloping meadows. A low dirge sung through the bare maple branches. Out under the glorious starlight he stood until he could endure it no longer; then he walked to the barn, and, rolling back the door, entered. It was warm inside, and he strolled down the long rows of stanchions, stroking his pets, and pouring out his fear to them:

“O my Daffodil, my Lily Bell, my Maude, my Aurora Leigh, you beauties! But what would you be without her?”

Then he thought of the seven trustful faces before the firelight, and his heart was torn. “What could they do?” he cried. And he went on down the lines of cattle, until he came to the end. He was proud of his dairy. By intelligent attention to details, he had developed a business reputation far beyond the limits of his own county. The products of his farm were always in demand. From a financial point of view, he had already proven his sagacity in locating in the country. Not a man in the valley had equaled him. But what were his fruitful fields, his barns, his thoroughbred cows, or his butter trade? What was his beautiful home? Mockery apart from her!

At length he returned to the house. No one was in the sitting-room. He dropped into a chair, and stretched his feet toward the grate. The place was full of warmth and cheer, because she had made it so. Without her, the soul of it would be



HE STRETCHED HIS FEET TOWARD THE GRATE

gone. He scarcely seemed to have realized so fully before how essential she was to his very life. Resting his head on his hand, he listened. She was in the children's room upstairs. He could hear her read from the Book of Acts about Paul's leavetaking of the brethren at Ephesus. He had always thought it sad. But to-night it was unbearable. When he heard her read the sentence, "Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more," he nearly cried out in his agony. Then the reading ceased.

Mrs. Livingstone gave each a good-night kiss. When she came to Leroy, he put up his arms and held her.

"You're the best mother in the world," said he.

"I am not as good as I ought to be," she answered.

"You're good enough for me!" was his stout reply.

Then she wondered whether there might not be some truth in the words:

"When the world may do its worst,
God and she have had them first."

She closed the stove, put out the light, and went downstairs. Mr. Livingstone had drawn a tête-a-tête close in front of the fire, and stood waiting for her. The hour after the children were in bed always belonged to him; and something very

extraordinary must occur to call him away from home.

"Let us sit very close together," said he, drawing her lovingly down beside him. Then he kissed her. The glow of the fire and of his manner crimsoned her cheeks, until she turned her face from his gentle gaze.

"Look at me, darling," said he. Her eyes, so full of sincerest loyalty, were lifted to his. "This is like the first time I told you," said he; "but I never loved you as I do to-night." She put her hand in his in tenderest appreciation, still looking into his eyes. In that solemn moment, all the anxiety of the previous hour seemed to sweep over him, and he could scarce restrain himself.

"O what is it?" she said, suddenly; for she saw the pained expression.

"Do you not know?" he asked with unsteady voice. "Lucretia, darling, I am afraid, I am afraid. What if—" But he did not finish.

"O you must not be afraid," she said. "I am not. I never knew such joy as I feel to-night."

As she spoke, she seemed to him like a being transfigured. Perhaps it was because she held within her heart such strange, sweet hopes.

"I know you have no fear. You are brave. But I could not live without you." She looked at him with eyes so full of love and yearning that you would have thought she could not live without him. "You must not leave me," he implored.

"I shall not leave you," she said, simply.

"I wish I had your faith, Lucretia."

Then, with his arm folding her tenderly, he sat for some minutes, gazing into the fire. What he saw there, and what she saw as she sat beside him, only they knew.

Often after that, out in the barn, passing down the stanchion rows, he would stroke his pets, and say: "We could not get along without her, my beauties." It was a pathetic sight. And yet, somehow, he fancied he saw in their intelligent faces a look of conscious sympathy. It seemed to bring him comfort. He did not feel free to communicate his fear to any one else, not even to his wife, since that winter evening. Nor could he cause sorrow to his children by committing to them his secret. So he and the Jerseys shared it together. Whether or not Mrs. Livingstone maintained her uniform courage, often, during the following months, when he did not seem to see, she would let her work fall from her hands, and sit looking at him with such pitying eyes. She could not help knowing of his anxiety.

But the days sped, happy days for the school-children, who indulged in snowballing, skating, or coasting, according to the hardness of the ice or snow. When the winter was over, they thought there never had been one like it before, and never would be again. During three days in February not a man drove up the valley; for no mortal could well

get through the drifts. The top of the barn, only, could be seen from the house, because of the snow piled high between them. One of the dining-room windows was entirely covered by the heaping of the feathery flakes upon the porch. Wintry days in the North are always wonderful to well-clothed and well-fed children. They know nothing of the pathos of human want without, and can enjoy to the full the delight of their white-walled castle. Of course, this three days' storm broke up the coasting and the skating. But what of that? Such stories as they told! Some were original, some borrowed. The snow could account for either. At times, in their imagination, the house was transformed into a glittering palace, inhabited by wondrously-beautiful princes and princesses, clad in gorgeous apparel. Again, it was the den of a giant ogre, and the scene of the most horrifying deeds ever committed. What narrow escapes they had! They trembled at the creations of their own fancy. So the house would ring with exclamations of delight, or shrieks of terror, as the occasion demanded.

The winter passed, and almost before any one knew it, the flowers were opening under the April rains. Now the month of May is two-thirds gone. Hepaticas, spring beauties, adder's-tongue, and squirrel-corn are out of bloom. The trillium is fading. Jack-in-the-pulpit opens, while the man-

drake awaits unfolding. O these May days are simply ravishing! One feasts his soul on beauty, and is satisfied. It is Sunday afternoon, and, though still May, the air has lost the touch of summer, and a breath of November blows over the hills, lying rich and dark beneath overhanging clouds. The maple foliage, the blossoms having fallen, has become luxuriant, though still retaining that rapturous green that makes one cry for very ecstasy, and covers the meadows and grainfields with a halo as of some enchanted land. Twilight draws on, with everywhere the calm and repose of a Sunday evening in the country. "Perfection! Perfection!" is the word upon one's lip. But at his heart something tugs that is not all exuberant. A melancholy chord vibrates; for the glory arches a lifetime, and he is treading again the bright paths of childhood; and, looking backward in the gathering shadows of such a day, a minor note sings in his heart, and the glow of the past outshines the perfection of beauty resting upon the present.

Mr. Livingstone stood dazed, out under the maples. He was looking back to the time when, care-free, he roamed those hills. The glorious light of a day like this had then no touch of pain. For a moment only did he turn backward. He must face the present, though it were full to the hilltops with anguish. He was a man. He would stand erect. Then, there were his children. They needed

him now as never before. He went from under the maples, into the parlor, and up the stairs, to the best room in the house. There, on a small cot, lay a tiny boy, with heaven-blue eyes; and on the bed lay the form of the woman who, for love's sake, had gone into the shadows. By the window stood the family physician, looking regretfully out among the maple leaves. He had just said to the nurse, "This is when a man does not like to be a doctor—when he can't relieve suffering. But when he can't—"

Then Mr. Livingstone entered, and, with his appealing eyes, read the answer to the question he would ask. No hope! No hope! Yet she had not feared. He recalled that night by the fire, with the glow of health and beauty in her face. He saw her now with blanched lips and closed eyes. Just then a robin in the maple above the window, having lost its young, was pouring into the twilight the saddest lament. Mr. Livingstone could endure no more. He crossed the hall to the room where his children were. Lawrence and Charlotte stood looking out of the window toward the grove, where they had so often gathered flowers for mother. Indeed, there was now a vase of violets in her room that had been placed there the night before.

"I thought the woods were beautiful until to-day," said Charlotte. "But they never will be beautiful again."

Mr. Livingstone knew they might for the child; but they could not for him. In a corner of the room crouched Lilian, trying to hush her own anguish. She never said much, but, though young, she felt deeply; and with her such a wound as this would be long in healing. Norman and Leroy had forgotten the "merry whistled tunes" of yesterday; and Mary had her face buried among the pillows. The father of these stricken children sank into a chair, and they came to him. Constance was upon his knee. She seemed to be listening to something outside.

Presently she said, "I hear somebody calling. I think the birds are calling mother."

"No, dear," said Mr. Livingstone, trying to smile, "the birds are not calling, but God is calling."

"Is he? Will he take my mother away? Then I don't like God." And Mr. Livingstone did not try just then to make her understand.

He could not stay long from his wife's room, but returned, and, sitting down beside her, looked steadily into her face. She was almost over. Just one more pull and her boat would have touched the other side, where she would see her "Pilot face to face." He knew that then she would not be afraid. And he ought not to fear. But his heart quailed. How could he help it? He did not take his eyes from her face. The minutes ticked away, and the hours, until near midnight. He was alone

with her. The others had quietly left the room, that they might not look upon his grief; for nothing could be done. Her boat seemed still to hold its course within the stream. He thought he heard the whir of wings high in the maple branches. He started. Were the angels coming? He watched to see them bear her away, and he felt that ever after he should think of those maples as a pathway to the stars. But, hark! the muffled tones of the clock in the room below strike twelve. He is still gazing upon her face. Just then a hand touches his arm. It is the doctor's. He also has stood for some minutes looking upon that same face.

"Livingstone," said he, "have hope."

"What, did they not take her? I thought I heard them carry her away."

Just then she opened her eyes, and, though they seemed almost to look from the other shore, they plainly said to him, "I am not afraid."

Glancing upward he heard from somewhere these words: "Be of good comfort."

At length morning dawned, and with it there swayed through the trees the breath of summer. All the chill of the day before had gone. The blue upon the distant hills spoke peace and cheer. The birds filled the air with melody. Out from the shadow of the previous night the Livingstone household had come with great rejoicing.

She was much loved through the valley; and

when neighbors came early to find how she was, they almost feared to ask. Mrs. Thornton drove all the way from the village, and when told by the faithful servant of the change, looked relieved. But she said heartlessly, "What a pity that she should have had any more children!"

Upstairs, at that moment, was the mother just returning to consciousness, and the sweet prophecy in her heart was this: "The child for whom I went deepest into the valley may yet bring me the largest joy." Mr. Livingstone saw the smile upon her lips, and was glad. Then the door opened softly, and Charlotte brought in a bountiful contribution from the woods of the richest blue violets. They were placed where she could look upon them and grow strong.

CHAPTER V

"THE HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE"

WHEN Mrs. Thornton drove out again to Maple Grove it was midsummer. By the servant's permission she entered unannounced, and found her friend very pale, but beautiful, looking into the deep-blue eyes of the wee boy upon her lap. Mrs. Livingstone lifted to her a face of such transporting joy as she could not understand. "One would suppose by this time," thought Mrs. Thornton, "that a baby would have ceased to be a wonder!" Did she not know that it was not so much the wonder of the baby as the prophecy of the man that lighted the mother's face?

"How can I forgive you for not bringing Margaret and Horace?" asked Mrs. Livingstone.

"I feared to disturb you," was the reply. "Somehow the noise of the children makes me nervous, and I have only two. I do not know what it would be with eight."

Mrs. Livingstone gave her a look of pain. She said quietly: "You have much more than I to try

your nerves. I rather think that if I had no children at all, and were attempting the variety of public work that you conduct, I should be distracted.”

Mrs. Thornton felt the truth of the statement; for she was in a constant nervous tension that was nearly setting her wild. She appeared to take little notice, however, and went on:

“Not since my marriage have I enjoyed life as much as during the last two years. The children are out of my arms, and are not much care to me. I am free to come and go when I please. Then Mr. Thornton’s evenings are all taken at the office. You do not know what a relief it is to be no longer tied down by domestic duties.”

It must be confessed that Mrs. Livingstone was unable to appreciate any such freedom. Doubtless she looked somewhat mystied as she listened to Mrs. Thornton’s enthusiastic utterance. In her schooldays she had tasted the joys of public approbation. She had seen its effect upon some women since. She had seen the unselfish grow grasping, the contented become dissatisfied, the home-loving restless; and she had reached the conclusion that the praise of the world was not always sweet. There was a little bitter in the cup. Indeed, she had heard some of the most devoted leaders in reform say that, if they were not divinely compelled to do the work, they could not stand before the public eye and endure its censure. The noisy world knows

not how to feed a woman's soul. But what mother with a heart does not covet the exquisite joy of resting, book in hand, by her own firelight, with her children tucked safely in bed! Yet not all are thus privileged. The world needs some women as teachers, nurses, and missionaries, to help alleviate suffering, and banish ignorance, cruelty, and superstition; and to many noble souls it becomes a part of heroic sacrifice. Mrs. Livingstone fully appreciated all this. What came near exasperating her was to hear the sacred obligation of motherhood assailed. She did not exactly know how to answer Mrs. Thornton, so she simply waited for her to go on.

"I must say," at length continued her guest, "that I do not know what to do with Horace. The nurse can not control him. And I have about decided that it will be cheaper to board him at the convent than to hire a nurse and keep him at home."

"Monstrous!" said Mrs. Livingstone, with great vehemence. She was indignant, but she held herself. If anything appealed to her sense of justice, it was the sight of a boy that needed mothering. She had always felt such to be the case with Horace Thornton, nothing more. Only a steady, wise, loving hand to lead him, and there would be no excuse for sending him to the convent. If the case had been hers, she would have thought it worth while, even for just one, to hide

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for a time from the world, that she might fix the character of her child.

“God has not given you such a beautiful home, and all that heart could wish, to have you turn your boy over to that institution for training! I would keep him at home or die in the effort.”

“You certainly take it very seriously.”

“I certainly do,” said she.

Evidently the conversation of that afternoon, in Mrs. Thornton's case, was a mild corrective; for the convent proposition was never again mentioned. And the next time she came to Maple Grove, she brought Margaret and Horace. They went wild over the baby. Margaret was a sweet child of eight. She stood looking for some minutes into the little face, when she said suddenly:

“Mamma, I wish you would go to the Children's Home, and get two just like him. I wish you would get four!”

“Yes, do,” said Horace.

Mrs. Thornton was annoyed. Soon Leroy and Mary took their guests out into the meadows, up in the orchard to the spring, and to the woods and showed them where the flowers grew, though not many were in bloom. They saw the barns full of contented cows, and the foaming milk fill the pails. It was a great day. And Mrs. Thornton let them enjoy it. She even consented to remain till after supper. The way those children devoured

the blackberries and cream was remarkable to behold. One would imagine that they had eaten nothing for a week.

On the way home that night there was an unwonted calm in the usually restless eyes of Mrs. Thornton, and a peaceful smile upon her lips. The explanation was easy. By her side two happy children laughed and chatted over the day's delights; and she, lost in their joy, for the time forgot the club, the Mothers' Meeting, the gathering of the directors of the Children's Home, the meeting of the Ladies' Aid Society, and the paper to be written on "Modern Fiction." And so she found sweet consolation in the companionship of her children.

The next afternoon, however, two rather disconsolate little people were sitting upon Mrs. Thornton's front porch, watching the passers-by along the street. Presently Horace said solemnly:

"I don't like this. I wish we were at Aunt Lucretia's. It's lots more fun there than it is here."

"Yes," put in Margaret, with some hesitation, as though not caring to compromise her own home, and yet admitting the truth of her brother's remarks.

"I'd go and live at Maple Grove and be Aunt Lucretia's boy, if mamma would let me. Then I could run all over the meadows and woods, and milk the cows, and maybe I could cut the hay. And just think of that big silo they were filling yesterday!

Was n't it fun to see the corn shoot up into it?" He paused to catch breath, then went on: "But here all a boy can do is to wear his white suit, and sit on the front porch, or walk with the nurse in the garden or down the street. I just hate it!" Then he paused two or three minutes, expecting his sister to reply. He evidently considered his utterance deserving of notice. She merely looked at him, however, as though awaiting something further. Soon he simply said: "It would n't be quite so bad, if we had mamma."

"No, but mamma has to be at the club this afternoon," said Margaret.

"I don't believe Aunt Lucretia ever went to a club. I didn't hear her say anything about it," replied Horace, somewhat regretfully.

"You know," replied Margaret, "how pretty mamma looks when she is dressed to go away. We ought to feel proud of her. That's what the nurse says."

"She does n't look half as sweet as Aunt Lucretia did yesterday, with that little boy in her arms. So there!"

His small world was terribly out of joint that afternoon. He was trying real hard just then to be proper and stay at home and keep his clothes clean. But the effort did not last long. The attractions outside the gate were so much more fascinating than those within, that he was soon gone.

Just at nightfall, the neighbors saw a lady turn in at the side entrance. Then, as often before, they heard: "Horace! Horace!" But no response.

"Call a little louder, mother. He is not far away to-night, just down the street in front of the store. He will hear if you call loud enough. Or, at least, he will come, if you take him by the hand and lead him home." This is what some would have said, if they had spoken.

Three miles up the valley, another mother had laid her baby to rest for the night. Then she had read to her band of seven that wonderful chapter ending, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Finally, she had gone downstairs to meet her husband. He was waiting for her as usual. He had no lamp, but stood in the open door in the moonlight. She came to him. He put his arm around her, and took her hand in his. Her face was still white, but he fancied the color rose in it as he talked. And the moonlight flooded the landscape.

"But the dew is falling. We must not stand here," he said, and gently drew her inside, still holding her hand. They sat within the warmth of a low fire in the grate. For in our Northern climate, sometimes the chill of a summer evening requires artificial heat. "Do you know what I have been thinking of late?" asked he. "It is this,

“The hand that rocks the cradle”—you know the rest.”

She smiled. “It takes a good deal of ‘rocking’ sometimes. I certainly do not see how mothers can succeed who delegate the training of their children to others. Some one else can do the washing, the sewing, and the baking, if necessary. But unless there is very urgent reason against it, I must make the care of the children my chief concern. If I am a misanthrope, it is the farthest from my intention. But I can not help thinking somewhat anxiously, at times, of certain tendencies these days.”

“What, for instance, my dear?”

“So many women chafing under domestic restraint. They look upon such a life as one of bondage, and are all the while sighing for liberty.”

“Anything more?”

“Yes, though this may be related to my first observation. It is the mad rush of every man to keep up with the procession; as though, if he stopped to look behind, he would lose his footing, with no hope of ever rising again. Perhaps a more domestic ambition on the part of his wife would admit of a slower gait.”

“No doubt,” said he.

“I don’t know about all this club-work,” she continued. “It is a source of culture for women

who have had few opportunities. But there seems to be no time for much else. Other activities of a purely benevolent character can not hold their right proportion of the time and thought of even Christian women. Besides, such abandonment to club interests must add to the decline in home life. Am I growing pessimistic, I wonder?"

"No, you are not," said Mr. Livingstone, "and your observations are true, whether spoken of men or women. Certainly, the club has its advantages, and, doubtless, has exerted a refining influence over many a home. But, on the other hand, I fear some people are paying a big price for these benefits."

"One should be careful," replied Mrs. Livingstone, "not to put undue emphasis upon this one cause. Other conditions must share the responsibility. Whatever requires time and thought that belong to the family is harmful."

"Well?" questioned Mr. Livingstone.

"Think how it is in the commercial world. Fathers and sons as traveling men, living at hotels, and gone weeks at a time! Then, little children and mothers behind counters and in factories, helping to earn the bread for the household! Under such circumstances home loses much of its charm. Modern life, socially, commercially, and intellectually, is at too quick a pace."

Then they were silent awhile. He picked up *The Dairyman*, to finish an article he was reading

on the manufacture of high-grade butter; for he had been a close student of the demands of the trade, and was ready to adopt any necessary innovation to command the best market. She, for a little diversion, turned to a book of poems. Presently she laid it aside. He had already finished his paper, and sat waiting for her.

“Let me tell you, dearest,” said he, “you must not again pass into the shadow.”

She looked a minute steadily into his face. “Possibly not,” she answered, slowly. “But we could not do without our beautiful boy. He will be such a sweet little companion when the others are in school. I will ‘rock the cradle,’ and some day, it may be, he will—”

“Rule the world,” put in his father.

“We shall see,” was her reply.

The moonlight grew brighter. The shadows under the maples lay thick and dark. The frogs croaked. The crickets chirped. Under the magic spell of night, the household slept.

CHAPTER VI

HER SUBJECTS

CONSTANCE, four years old at the time, stood by the window watching the first snowflakes fall among the trees. "Those look like birds comin' down," she said.

"Yes," said Mrs. Livingstone, "and if you will get me baby's cloak, we will take him out to see the birds."

"O, Joe did that!" said the child.

But who "Joe" was, no one could tell, except that he was an imaginary character, and for several months had been one of her favorite friends. Almost every day she had something to say about him or his family. When asked to do anything disagreeable, she found him a very convenient acquaintance. The fancy that he had done it seemed to relieve her of any responsibility in the matter. She always had much to do with people of the imagination, besides ascribing imaginary attributes to her dolls. Often she sat rocking, nobody knows whom or what, and then would lay the little nothing on the bed with all the tenderness of a young mother.

It probably could be said that she had in her make-up a wholesome mixture of good and bad. At least she had good enough to be somewhat lovable, and bad enough to allay any unnecessary anxiety on the part of friends as to her immediate translation. The change from one state of grace to another was often very sudden. One hour it was marvelous what an evil spirit could do with a small girl; the next, she was a perfect angel. She had moods as various as an April sky. A crotchety old woman of the neighborhood had once said of the Livingstone children: "They are good, but I have seen smarter." It came to be a great joke among them afterward. But evidently, Constance had been appointed to save the reputation of the family. She was neither very good, nor was she stupid.

Little Caryl afforded her a great deal of amusement and some annoyance as the months rolled by. One day she was contemplating his toothless mouth, and naturally concluded that she once must have been like him. Ever after that she was wont to refer to the time, "years ago," when she was a "little boy without any teeth."

She was always ready with an answer. One day, Mrs. Livingstone, in an effort to secure obedience, said:

"I can't have a little girl live with me who won't do what I say."

"But I'm here," said Constance, with a mischievous look.

Her dolls were an interesting company. "Rosy Posy" was the first; but she broke that in a fit of anger, by striking against it the head of "Hel'n L'reeze" (Helen Louise). After that "Rosy Posy's" place at the little table was vacant, and it really was pathetic. "Hel'n L'reeze" she lost, and afterward decided that she must have "left the earth and gone up in heaven."

Once she asked, "Was I robed in angel's clothes when I came down to earth like a little baby?"

At another time she said: "I do n't see how God could make the world and us. I do n't see how we're anything, anyway. Do you know?" she questioned her mother.

"Not altogether," was the answer.

"Then I wish God would whisper to us how it is. I mean to ask him some time."

In those days she often talked of heaven, and for a while seemed to want to go there, but afterward decided she did not care to do so. Mrs. Livingstone had read again and again to her children the little book called "Line upon Line," a story of the Israelites, in which occasional reference was made to the sounding of the trumpets when the dead should rise. One day Constance electrified her mother, by saying: "I am not going to get up when the horns blow."

"What horns?" said Mrs. Livingstone.

"The horns that say, 'It's time to get up from the grave.'"

She once came to her mother with this mysterious question: "When people die, do they go roarin' up to heaven?" She may have associated the idea of the translation of disembodied spirits with reverberations of thunder.

She had pronounced likes and dislikes; and her first impressions were usually correct. Of one woman, she said: "I like her very well, 'cause she's strong and bounding;" of another, "I don't like her; she prays too hard."

For the most part, she was well; but one day, being requested by Mary to come and play, she replied: "I can't; something aches me." Once she feared she should have "ammonia." At another time, she bruised her knee. "O," she cried, "I hurt the elbow of my leg!"

Her table manners were occasionally somewhat dictatorial, and exasperating to Mary, whose prim conduct was the admiration of all. One evening at supper four-year-old Miss Constance had been ordering what she wanted without regard to the feelings of others. Mrs. Livingstone finally took her into the kitchen, and told her that if she wanted anything, she was to say, "Please pass the so-and-so." She brightened at once, and came back with the air of a lady. For a time she ate in silence,

giving evidence of the wholesome effect of the previous interview. Then assuming much dignity, but with a mischievous glance at her mother, she said, "Please pass the so-and-so." This tended to upset table decorum. Everybody tried to look sober, but not all succeeded. Yet Leroy, with the utmost gravity, managed to pass the cheese, which she graciously accepted, as though it were the very dish desired.

Charlotte, whose manner was often awkwardly precise, could not see any use in the child's performances; she might just as well obey promptly and speak respectfully. But she saw in years afterward, when she had two children of her own. Then she marveled that her mother could have guided eight.

Charlotte had never told more than one lie in her life. Hence Constance's tendency to prevaricate was shocking. No one could tell how much was due to her fertile imagination, and how much to "total depravity." Certain it was that the latter article of the creed was not likely to be stricken out by the Livingstone household, as long as Constance staid there.

She used to "try races" with Mary, and later with Caryl; and she usually managed by some means, "foul" or "fair," to "beat." Once, when Mary was eight, and Constance was six, they set out to work covers for sofa pillows, each one to see

if she could finish before the other. The second morning, however, Mary's material was nowhere to be found. Search was made from garret to cellar, Constance, the picture of innocence, cordially offering to help, assuming meanwhile an air of mysterious bewilderment as to the whereabouts of the missing article, and wondering who could have "disappeared it." And yet her perplexity was so natural that nobody imagined for a moment that she had the remotest knowledge upon the subject. Investigation was continued at intervals for three days, until Mrs. Livingstone was pretty sure of her ground.

Then one morning she said: "Come, Constance, suppose you and I look for Mary's work." Constance was only too glad. Mrs. Livingstone was a little shaken, but she went ahead. "Now, you look in every place where you think it might be."

And she led the way in their search, through the children's room, into her own room, downstairs in the sitting-room, and in the parlor. At last they came to the "spare room."

"Shall we look under the feather-bed?" said Constance.

"It would be well," replied her mother.

Then she began rolling it back; but no sewing material appeared.

"Shall I roll it any farther?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Livingstone.

One more turn, and there lay the lost work, wrinkled and creased by the weight of the bed.

Lawrence was to take the children that morning for a ride on the lake, seven miles north. They went. But Constance, contrary to her desire, was not among them.

Her favorite occupations were to "ride down hill in winter and pick flowers in summer." She called that "just living." Anything else was work. Her influence over Caryl was not always salutary. She once ventured this bit of confidence to Charlotte: "If I had n't taught him to be bad he would be the best boy in the country." Of course, that "bad" was not very vicious, but probably the natural outcropping of his own propensity, and not due, in any marked degree, to his sister's example.

He was fond of noise even at the age of two and a half years. One day he was pounding with his hammer.

"I am glad," said Constance, "that Mrs. Horner is n't here, for she'd have to have it stopped. It'd pretty near drive her crazy, as she says. When I was yelling just softly, she said, 'Stop your yelling like that!' I would not like such a mother, would you?"

She was not many years older, however, before she herself made vigorous protest against his continual use of the hammer. It made her "nervous." But she manifested a reasonable degree of leniency

toward him. One day when he had cut his mother's quilt, causing a look of reproof, Constance hastened to say: "Caryl is worth more than the quilt, is n't he? He's humanity, and the quilt is just cloth."

Being the youngest, there was really some danger of his remaining a baby too long. No one wanted him to wear pants; and, strange to say, he did not care much about it himself. He wanted to be made into a little girl and called "Sarah," for boys are "bad." So when, at the age of five, there was talk of changing his costume, he expressed considerable wavering in opinion, and ended by saying: "I don't want to wear pants till I'm six. I don't want to wear pants till I'm twenty." But after he had once put them on, he would rather be "frizzerin'" (a combination of "freezing" and "shivering") than to wear Constance's cloak.

A little later Mrs. Livingstone found, as she had predicted, that he was a sweet companion to her when all the others were in school. It would do one good to see those two. They were almost inseparable. Morning, noon, and night, they were side by side,—in the woods for flowers, in the garden for vegetables, in the barn for eggs, or in the orchard for apples; or, if in none of these places, then, best of all, in the big rocking-chair, reading. He used to sit on the arm of her chair, with his feet in her lap, looking at the pictures while she followed the printed page. So often were they thus

employed that Mr. Livingstone ordered the making of a "reading-chair." In that, if the boy had had his way, almost all of his time would have been spent. Here they read "Æsop's Fables," "Little Lord Fauntleroy," "The Jungle Book," and to his great delight, when near the age of six, "What a Boy Saw in the Army." He would listen to it, page after page, with the most eager attention, until he thought he "would like to go to war some time, if it would not be a dangerous war." But he saw that that did not satisfy his mother, and, thereafter, he was more guarded in the expression of his ambition.

"If I was a great man," he said one day, "you wouldn't mind if I went to war, would you?—if I was great like General Grant and General Sherman and Major Bowman?"

"Well, if you were needed, possibly I should n't," said she.

"If I wasn't great, and were needed you would n't mind, would you?" The only answer was a kiss.

She read two or three chapters daily, until she had finished, and then said: "I'm almost sorry it is done, are n't you?"

"Yes," said he, "it's so good," with a decided emphasis on the word "so."

To most of this story Constance was an interested listener. Yet the scenes of carnage were hor-

rifying to her. But she would sit and look at her mother with intensest gaze, as though upon the gory field itself. The fate of Stonewall Jackson grieved her greatly.

"I wish Jesus would tell us right in our hearts where Stonewall Jackson went when he died," she said.

After reading that terrific portrayal of the battle of Gettysburg, Mrs. Livingstone said, "Is n't that grand?"

"Yes," said Constance, with much emotion, "but I feel sorry for the rebels."

Caryl was developing a spirit of mischief, and he liked to practice on Constance. Occasionally he would strike up:

"'Yes, we'll rally 'round the flag, boys.'"

"O, do n't! I shall dream of war," she would cry.

Then, in thunderous tones, he would begin: "Guns, cannon, soldiers, battles, Stonewall Jackson, General Lee!"

"Do n't, do n't!" she would implore. But presently, remembering his weak point, she would brighten and hurl this terrifying array at him: "Rats, mice, snakes, lizards, toads!" Then he would subside; for he was in mortal dread of rats. It was only necessary to mention the word, and he would curl his feet up in his mother's lap. Cats, also, sometimes struck terror to his heart. One afternoon

he ran in declaring that he had seen a "wildcat" behind the barn. "It was a plaid cat," he said.

Once when he had been unusually exasperating, Constance struck him, and was required to apologize. She did it in a half-hearted way. He declared: "She did n't apojolize me right, and I won't forgive her."

Though by no means a saint, he was, in some respects, rather more religious than Constance. For example, "Pilgrim's Progress" was his delight. She used to hide the book to prevent its being read. One Sunday, he sat in church beside his mother, just before the administering of the sacrament. "I'm going to kneel with you, to-day," he whispered.

"If you love Jesus," said Mrs. Livingstone, "and think about him when you take the bread and wine, it will be all right."

So he kneeled at one side of her, while Constance was at the other. It made a favorable impression upon him. A few nights afterward, having tucked him in bed, Mrs. Livingstone thanked God for the little boy that was trying to be good.

"I do try," said he, after the prayer. "I have to try, since I took the bread and wine." Presently he added: "We do n't have to be good, but we have to try to be good."

"Highland Mary" proved to be the handsome one of the girls, and, with her aristocratic airs, was

quite captivating at times. The deep roses in her cheeks, and the luster of her soft brown hair, were occasion of some envy on the part of Constance, whose cheeks were too pale, and hair somewhat sandy. Mary's tastes were exquisite; and she would sometimes toss her head in high scorn for what she thought her sister's lack of good breeding. And Constance would answer:

"O, I do wish you would be a trifle less punctiliously proper. There is no danger of your ever turning 'the world upside-down.'"

One evening, all were sitting about the fire, listening to a story from Norman. A slight roughness in his voice led Constance to remark that he needed to put lard in his throat.

"Well," said he, "if I need lard in my throat, you need a whole hogshead of it in yours."

"O," said she, "there is n't lard in a hog's head, it's in its body."

Everybody laughed immoderately. When they had quieted somewhat, Norman tried to explain to her what a hogshead is.

But she insisted, "A hog's head is the head of a white pig." While all broke into another fit of laughter, Lilian kissed her sister; for she had great consideration for the feelings of others, and was never, in her life, known to trample on them. She had quick sympathy, and it was to her, more than to any one else, that the little ones went with bumped

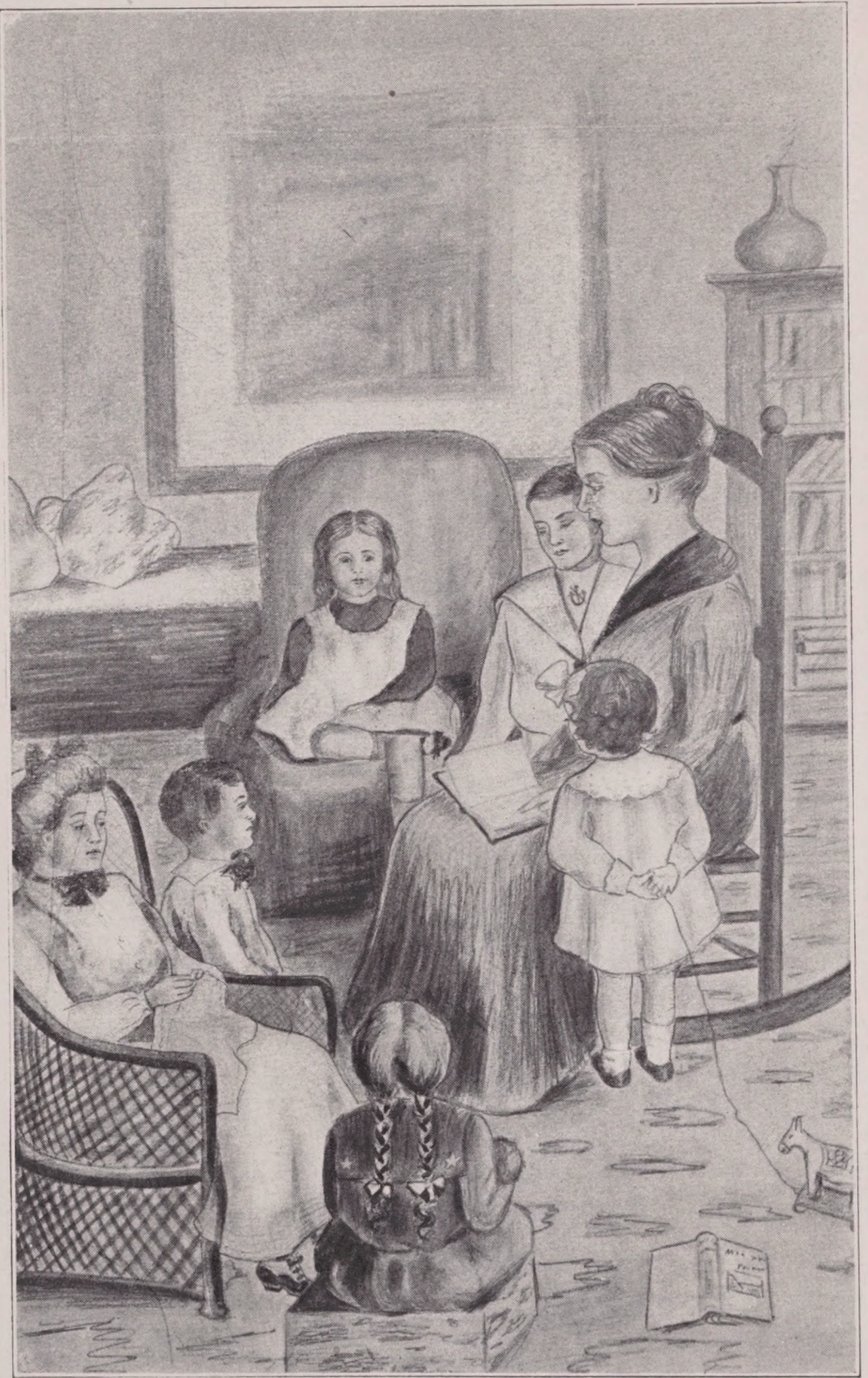
heads and cut fingers. A supply of absorbent cotton and witch-hazel was always at hand, and she became a skillful home surgeon.

To keep this household, with its varied tastes and inclinations, all in tune, required a power worth having; and Mrs. Livingstone had that power. When asked how she secured it, she simply replied:

"It grew upon me. I can not tell how to get it, but only feel I have it."

She was not a general like some mothers, able to command her own home and run an orphan asylum besides; nor like Susannah Wesley, able to prevent her children from crying aloud after the age of six months. Mrs. Livingstone's children, even at the mature age of six years, actually cried at times so as to be heard. And now and then, to their shame be it said, they really answered their mother in a way to make the Puritan matrons hold up their hands in horror. In fact, a neighbor once reported that Constance, then only six years old, said, "I won't!" when asked to amuse Caryl.

So that Mrs. Livingstone, in her undertaking, realized that she had no gifts above the ordinary in herself; nor virtues above the ordinary in her children. Her power lay in using ordinary gifts with extraordinary faithfulness. She laid great weight upon their last hour before bedtime. It was spent in the children's room, by the fire in winter, and by the open window in summer. There



THE LAST HOUR BEFORE BEDTIME

she read those books that every boy and girl ought to hear—books that open out to their wondering minds the mysterious and sacred beginnings of life. But before reading of the books came the story from the mother's own lips, with a wild flower in her hand to illustrate the plant baby. The first eager questionings were promptly and cautiously answered, before some unhallowed tongue had told the story wrong. She knew that for lack of knowledge many a boy and girl were ruined. So they were made to know themselves, and to feel the desolation wrought by evil habits. She told them the facts in their tender years, when innocence could look her in the face without timidity, and before they felt within themselves the presence of those hidden powers that were to work their overthrow or deliverance. The result was that, in after years, one said of her boys, "They are the cleanest set of men I ever knew." Not a coarse joke nor a questionable word fell from their lips. But it did not come by accident. They had no better hearts than other boys. It was the patient seed-sowing that did it. The weeds had not much chance.

It was in that wonderful room, also, that she read the Book of books, from Genesis to Revelation. It was a surprise, even to her, to find that those so young should manifest steadfast interest in such treatises as Leviticus and Deuteronomy. But she found her opportunities. When Constance said she

thought "God was awfully strict," she was led to understand that sin was something fearful, and must be punished. It was worth reading pages of sacrificial requirements, with their promise of atonement, to hear Caryl say, "He always had a way to forgive them, did n't he?"

Sometimes they would kneel by the open window. Then it was sweet to hear their soft voices, and see the still moonlight upon their heads, and think that God was looking down.

There was not much *eclat* surrounding this mother in those quiet years at Maple Grove. Indeed, she seemed to Mrs. Thornton to be putting in a good deal of time in humble service that would better be performed by some one else. But she was sublimely indifferent to the judgment of others. She knew what she was doing. She was making men and women. And patiently, day by day, she sowed the seeds that, twenty years afterward, were to spring up into a glorious harvest.

CHAPTER VII

KEEPING FAITH WITH THE BOY

It was interesting to note the confidence between Mrs. Livingstone and her boys. She was a particular chum with each of them. Not but that she held the closest relation between herself and daughters. But somehow her strength was with her sons. Perhaps she saw how easily they could be lured into pitfalls. As for the notion that a young man must sow his "wild oats," she had no patience with it. Mrs. Thornton had sometimes tried to hide behind that specious belief in contemplating the waywardness of Horace. But Mrs. Livingstone was fully convinced that the harvest would be his sowing. Hence her determination to keep faith with her boys. In doing this she occasionally stood between them and reproof. Their foibles were not as easily overlooked by Mr. Livingstone, who now and then would forget how it used to be when he was a boy. He was not severe, but sometimes failed to sympathize with them in their mistakes.

Once, when Lawrence was old enough to know better, he took the wheelbarrow into the cellar.

It was great fun, until he accidentally bumped against a jug of vinegar, overturning it on the floor.

"Please don't tell father," he said, under his breath.

"Well, this may be your secret and mine," she said, simply; and a pail of water and a cloth soon removed the last sign of the accident. It served as well as a sharp rebuke. That wheelbarrow never again entered the cellar.

Lawrence became a great comfort to his mother. He would yield almost anything for the sake of peace, yet he was a positive young Christian. When it came to planning for a good time he always chose the last place. There were in him the qualities of which heroes are made. But it is doubtful if this fact was fully appreciated by any of the children except Lilian. She often gave vent to a bit of righteous indignation because of his sacrifices for the other boys, forgetting that the same observation might be made with regard to her.

Leroy was always getting into trouble. He was once walking backward in the barn, and sat down in a pail of milk. This was wholly inexcusable; but he wanted no mention made of it, and his wish was granted.

Seldom Norman required any assistance of the kind. For the most part he kept himself out of difficulties. Once, however, he built a fire under the woodhouse stairs. His father smelled the smoke.

Nothing more need be said than that Norman never repeated that experiment.

With her peculiar fitness in the management of the boys, it was natural that Mrs. Livingstone should have gladly welcomed Caryl as the baby of the family. Though, as it proved, he clung rather tenaciously to his babyhood, and raised some questions in the minds of his brothers and sisters as to whether he ever would become a man.

He was very much opposed to going to school; so he was allowed to take his own time, it being a half-formed belief with Mrs. Livingstone that children would better be a little slow in taking up the routine work of the classroom. After he was six years old, however, he was obliged to spend an hour each morning under his mother's direction. And in a few months he was able to do his own reading. This home instruction, while it probably had disadvantages, also had strong points. Those were weeks of great delight both to mother and son. A favorite pastime of his was writing stories—such as, "The Fairy Ring," "The Fish," "The Queen," and once—after an outing on the banks of a beautiful stream, this amateur writer of seven years ventured on a poem to his mother:

"I love you, mamma,
All day and night,
Where the streams are flowing
And the sun is bright.

I love you, mamma,
By the brooklet side,
Where the boats are sailing,
By the soft, smooth tide."

His people felt themselves about to reach prominence through their poet son. But it was several years before anything else of the kind ever came from his pen. It was one of those touches of heart or mind sometimes vouchsafed to childhood.

When, at the age of seven and a half years, he suddenly determined to go to school, it cast a shadow over the home; for he was the only child in it during the day, the others being beyond the accommodations of the district course. His going seemed a prophecy of the time when all the birds would have flown from the nest. One morning he set out, with book and slate, his mother accompanying him, along the country road, over the bridge, to the little red schoolhouse half a mile north. Miss Graham offered him a seat with the other children, and he was delighted.

After that, each morning, he walked to the school alone. But his leave-taking was of the most elaborate order. He would give the usual good-bye kiss, but, instead of whisking away as in most cases, he would walk backward along the drive, smiling and waving adieu as he went. Then he would dodge behind each maple, and spring out again with another smile and a bow. When beyond the

trees, he would go slowly down the hill, looking back over his shoulder occasionally. Mrs. Livingstone, not to disappoint him, would leave the side porch for a more direct view from the parlor door. She did not want him to look back and fail to find her, nor did he want her to expect one more smile and not get it. So he bestowed the smiles and bows till reaching the highway and turning north. Then the stone fence and the hill would hide him, and she would think he was gone. But, presently, when about to turn away, she would see a little straw hat suddenly showing above the fence, then Caryl himself standing upon the top of the wall. With a final wave of the hand and a heroic bow, he would leap down, thus ending his farewell; while he left in his mother's thoughts, to gladden the hours till noon, the picture of a smiling face.

But there was reason to fear that such a boy would have difficulty in exercising tact upon the playground. Hence his career was watched with considerable interest. At the end of a few weeks an incident occurred, throwing light upon the case. While eating his noonday meal, he said to his mother: "There is somebody in school that I dislike more than any one else."

"Is it Susie Brown?" said Mrs. Livingstone.

"No," replied Caryl. "It is n't a girl. It's a boy. It's George Gordon. James Hall gave me his place in the line above George, and George did n't

like it, and said he 'd smash my face for me after school."

Mr. Livingstone felt disposed to see the boy at once. But Caryl would not hear to that, for he would have more reason than before to fear this youthful antagonist. Mrs. Livingstone suggested that she speak to Miss Graham about it.

"No, she 'd tell George, and he 'd be worse than ever."

"Well, suppose I visit the school this afternoon, as though nothing had happened, and walk home with you."

"All right, but please don't tell Miss Graham."

"I think I can arrange it," said his mother; "but first, tell me what you can say good about the boy?"

"He can draw better than any other one in school."

"Anything else?"

"Yes, he reads well, and has a voice like a girl's."

"That will do," said Mrs. Livingstone. "I shall be there."

She was expecting guests that evening, and had an unusual amount of work to prepare for them. But at half-past three she left a part of it unfinished, and in a few minutes looked in upon a room full of boys and girls, with needles and thread industriously outlining hats. They looked up smiling as she entered, for she was a frequent visitor. Being

seated she studied the school for a little, when she whispered to Miss Graham, "Which is George Gordon?" There had been recent comers into the district, and several of the schoolchildren were strangers to Mrs. Livingstone.

"That boy on the front seat," said Miss Graham. "Bright-looking child, is he not?"

"Yes, I should like to get acquainted with him."

Then Miss Graham showed one of his drawings, representing a woodpecker peeping from behind the trunk of a tree. It showed talent, and Mrs. Livingstone expressed herself pleased. When the school was dismissed, George happened to remain in his seat, so she sat down beside him.

"Is this George Gordon?" said she. "Well, I have heard Caryl tell so much about you that I wanted to know you. He says you can draw better than any one else in school, and that you read well. I expect you will be an artist, some day, and I am glad to meet you."

George smiled, and certainly did not look much like "smashing" her boy's face. She smiled, too, and after a few more words, said, "Good-bye," and walked away.

The next day, on his way home to dinner, up the slope, Caryl stopped to pick a bouquet of flowers. He was singing a song that his mother liked, and his sweet, clear voice was borne by the wind up to the open door where she sat sewing:

"Come down in the meadow this morning in summer,
And gather sweet blossoms that bloom by the way,
And hear in the woodland the brown partridge drummer
Beat up his brown soldiers to drill for the day.
O, sing in the morning the song that I love,
A song that is sweet as the lark's above."

He came on, filling the air with his melody, till he put the flowers in her hand.

"I got a sweet thought from you," she said.

"Thank you," he said in his pleasantest tone.

At the dinner-table he incidentally mentioned George Gordon. Everybody listened:

"Do you want to know what George did to-day?" Mrs. Livingstone was ready for anything. "I was coming down the schoolhouse steps" (then she had visions of his being pushed violently to the ground), "and I saw George coming around the corner of the building. He came toward me, and said, 'Did you tell your mother that I?' " (and Mrs. Livingstone almost held her breath); "'did you tell your mother than I could draw better than any one else in school, and that I read well?' Then he smiled. And that's what he did instead of fighting me," said Caryl.

A few days later he came home with this statement: "George Gordon says if any one jumps on me, he'll have to jump on him first."

One evening of early June, in the deepening twilight, Caryl sat upon a rustic seat on the side

porch, waiting for his mother. He had been there for a quarter of an hour while she was giving directions to Mary and Constance concerning preparations for the next morning's breakfast. Every two minutes he would call out, "Are you nearly ready?" When she came, he made a place for her, and said, "Let's talk." Half a dozen kittens were tumbling over one another in the grass, chasing down the drive, and climbing the maples, or trying to stir up a senseless toad to join in their frolic. Caryl held one of the kittens in his arms. There had been so much rain of late that the valley seemed a fruitful garden.

"This is like fairyland," Mrs. Livingstone suggested.

"No," he insisted, "it is too big. The trees are only a foot high, and the people an inch high in fairyland. This can't be fairyland. I wish there were fairies, though. Why didn't God make them?"

"Perhaps he wanted us to have something to imagine."

"But if there were real fairies," continued Caryl, "we could imagine something else."

"Possibly, then, we should want that something else to be real."

"I should n't. But I do wish there was just one fairy, and that she would give each of us a wand, and that when we waved the wand we could have

whatever we wanted. Then I should want to be rich, and I should wish the boys might plant corn without tar, and that the crows would n't get it; and," he added, after a pause, "if I should want to dress I'd be dressed." In dressing quickly he did not excel, his many futile races with Constance being witness to the fact.

It sometimes seemed as though the characteristics of the two should have been reversed. The aggressive independence of Constance would have better graced a boy. Yet her older brothers would have missed half the spice of their rural existence if it had not been for her ready response. Possibly at times she exceeded propriety, but Leroy's remarks often provoked heroic reply. One night she swung lazily in the hammock, singing a familiar melody. As a ten-year-old maiden she was taking life easy, and did not care to be disturbed. Any interruption of her song she thought uncalled for. So when Leroy came swaggering down the drive, he was ignored, "I'll pay her for this high-minded indifference," he thought. Strolling on, until he was a little distance past, and suddenly wheeling about, he exclaimed, with an air of intelligence:

"O Constance, did you know there's to be a total eclipse of the moon to-night?"

"Is there?" said she, springing out of the ham-

mock, and eagerly scanning the eastern horizon, already brightening with lunar beams.

"O, I don't know. I only asked for information."

Then he ran around the house, and she after him with a stick.

Though Mrs. Livingston had been compelled to refrain from any form of public activity, she proposed that her children should have the benefit of her privation. Consequently various organizations flourished under her management. Friday evenings were set apart for the different family gatherings. There was a missionary association trained beyond anything known in ordinary cases. The temperance society would suit the most exacting. A general literature association for entertainment, and a natural history society for observation, filled out the list. Such descriptions of natural objects as came before that body for discussion were of the largest variety. Anything was allowable, from a tomato-worm to the North Star. Leroy had a startling array of toads, lizards, frogs, butterflies, and ants. It soon became evident that a museum would be necessary. Here Mary had scores of varieties of mounted flowers and ferns, and Constance every kind of stone to be found on the farm. She seldom went out but that she came in with her apron full. Many of them had not

much geological meaning, but they sharpened her observation, and cultivated a tendency that was of later use.

Mrs. Livingstone had begun to write separate biographies of her children, and continued them until Norman and Lilian came. Then their experiences were so much in common that a single record was made. Each child had a savings-bank account, carefully kept by Mrs. Livingstone during the first ten years, when it was turned over to the young depositor. The thrift thus developed proved of untold advantage.

A strange experience came to her in those early days. She had gone to the village to do some winter trading. It was in November, one of those dreary, drizzly days, when one is inclined to feel very much like the weather. She had been unexpectedly detained in the store till early twilight. When she came out, everything was comparatively quiet, except the sepulchral "Chug, chug, chug," from the awful throat of the brewery. Nothing else was so prominently visible as that long, black tongue of smoke lapping the misty November air. She usually shuddered at the ghastly sight and sound. But to-night she was seized with horror. A strange and terrible illusion possessed her. Some minutes after turning from the main street up the valley, and when beyond the sound of that ominous noise, the falling of the horse's hoofs upon the

highway seemed but the chilling echo of that fearful sound. The gloomy shadows about her suggested that fateful tongue of smoke, curling and twisting and writhing like a serpent. Then, in the steadily darkening twilight, keeping pace with her carriage, there seemed to follow a grim procession of poor battered humanity. There were hundreds of thousands of young men tumbling and plunging toward the abyss. There also stalked the wasted forms of women chained to tottering husbands. Some were leading little children by the hand. Young women, who should have been "polished after the similitude of a palace," were rushing headlong, beauty and virtue gone, the demon in their souls. And once she caught the dim outline of a face, like one of the Thorntons.

"What!" she gasped, "Horace? His poor mother!" And she thought another walked beside him, but she could not discern who. She was held by this illusion until her horse turned through the gate at Maple Grove, and she was impressed with the thought that, in a world where the serpent coils, a mother must be heroically vigilant.

So, after that, upon seeing Horace, she seemed also to see that procession of men and women. Then she determined to communicate her fears to Mrs. Thornton. But that woman, while she thanked her friend, at the same time laughed at the possibility of such a result. She did not question the

waywardness of Horace. But years would steady him. As for Margaret, that other face beside his could not by any possibility be hers. She was one of those naturally perfect children, whose going astray was the farthest from anybody's thought. Whatever might come to Horace because of his seductive associations, Margaret was safe. Let others be concerned for the lapping of that black tongue, Mrs. Thornton had no occasion for alarm. So her friend felt constrained to keep silent on that point, and let time reveal the truth.

As for herself, Mrs. Livingstone would never allow ordinary engagements to stand between her and her children. She could not always accept even the simple social invitations of the neighborhood, though she was not indifferent to them; and many times had made appointments that she might give sympathy and counsel to some young mother, or encouragement to a boy or girl.

The Tioughnioga Valley was conceded to be of surpassing loveliness. And the naturally quiet village upon its river bank should have been a place of security. Formerly it had the reputation of being a community of unusual piety. But of late people were saying, "It is a hard place for boys." A casual observer would scarcely have thought it. There was an aristocratic air about the town, in its broad and densely-shaded streets, in its extensive yards and large dwellings, and in its well-dressed people, in-

dicative of something too high to stoop to the groveling influences of less classic surroundings. But just across the river, near the foot of a long hill, stood that institution, belching forth its horrid smoke and sounds. And it could not be that, during all the years, it should waken the quiet village without leaving a blight somewhere. Mrs. Livingstone realized this, and held scrupulous guard over her household.

CHAPTER VIII

“TRAINED FOR THE HIGHEST”

It was a great day in the Livingstone home when the first trip was made from Maple Grove to the village academy. Norman had the old family horse waiting at the side porch for Lawrence and Charlotte a full half hour before it was time to start. Everybody was excited. All were called upon to contribute to the outgoing of these two aspirants to knowledge. The wheels of progress on the butter farm actually slackened speed a little in deference to their departure. Even the engine in the milkhouse was fifteen minutes late in getting up steam—an occurrence almost unheard of. Finally Norman handed the reins to Lawrence, crying: “All aboard! Train going south!” The buggy had scarcely gone twice its own length, when “Wait a minute, wait a minute!” came breathlessly from the throats of the two little girls, who, with Caryl trudging between them, had come out of the pasture with a bunch of golden-rod; and Lawrence leaped to the ground to give them a kiss, an act he never missed. Charlotte stooped to take the flowers. This

interruption proved an advantage; for just then Lilian came out with the dinner-basket, which accidentally had been left in the pantry.

“O,” said Norman, “I was hoping you would forget that. Folks that work ought to do the eating.”

Then taking it from Lilian, he suddenly lowered it to the ground, as though its weight were fabulous. “Whew!” said he, drying the perspiration from his face, “somebody help me lift this bushel basket.”

All gathered about him, and, with much tugging and grunting, managed to get it under the buggy seat. Then they were off again.

“Hold on!” cried Leroy, in terror; “something’s the matter.”

“Whoa, Cæsar!” with a sudden hauling up of the lines.

“Your shadow is after you.”

“Get up!” said Lawrence; and they moved away amid uproarious laughter, the waving of sunbonnets, tossing of caps, and general wishes of success and long life.

They had just turned from the driveway into the road, when Norman called out, “I hope your Latin grammar will help you to milk old Brindle with a steadier hand to-night.”

When the others had subsided, Lawrence and Charlotte looked back to see their mother with radiant face under the butternut-tree, waving them

adieu. And, looking back in years to come, they always seemed to see her standing there. But when they drove away from under the maples that September morning, though they did not know it, they were turning the page of childhood. They saw it in after years; and the memory of those early days was full of the fragrance of flowers, the songs of birds and the multitudinous leaves of the forest; and over all the love of a woman that never failed, a love so abiding that to it their hearts had safely clung. She knew the importance of a steadfast support for the twining of those tender plants. She knew, too, that the continual tearing of the shoots away would stultify their growth, and that the bond of sympathy between mother and child must not be broken. So, coming and going, they always found her there, the first to greet them, the last to say good-bye. What that constancy meant to them, and how it saved them on the edge of many a precipice from going over, they understood long afterward. And they never ceased to wonder at the amazing steadfastness of her affections.

The return of Lawrence and Charlotte each night from the village was an interesting occasion. Mother awaited them at the stile. Norman, Lilian, Leroy, and Mary usually came in, after their walk from the district school, a little ahead of them, and stood waiting for the dinner-basket, hoping to find a generous slice or two of bread and butter,

to divide among themselves, while Constance and Caryl were ready for a ride to the barn.

Sometimes, when all of them were gathered about the study table, which stood of an evening with leaves spread in the family sitting-room, Lawrence, lifting his arms upward, would say, with mock-serious air, “Who knows upon what greatness these walls are looking down?” Then he would bend his energies to Virgil’s “Æneid” or Homer’s “Iliad.” More than once, from among the stanchions at night would be heard something about “The wrath of Achilles.” Charlotte, passing by on the outside, would answer, “The will of Zeus was accomplished.” Or, at another time, echoing over the cornfields would come this bit of Hellenic lore: “The twang of his silver bow was terrible;” until the ancient poet might have thought his fame appropriately perpetuated in the name of the village that slept in the valley. O, those wistful academy days! They passed all too quickly, leaving Norman and Lilian to sustain the honors of the Livingstone household; a task by no means easy, for the standard had been set high.

The few weeks before graduation, however, were a time of eager anticipation at Maple Grove. The new dress for Charlotte and the suit for Lawrence, the essay and the oration, were considered of great importance, and became topics of general discussion. Other less weighty matters — such as the

increase of the dairy product and the improvement of the farmland—were temporarily dropped. Each evening at supper there was a request to report progress. Then everybody listened attentively to these prospective graduates, offering suggestions as occasion demanded. It seemed to Norman that Charlotte was putting an unreasonable amount of time on her valedictory. She used to hide away every Saturday afternoon, and not show herself again till night.

During those days she had arranged herself a “den” under the roof, in the room over the kitchen. It suited her exactly, though possibly it would not suit every one. It was utterly devoid of modern extravagances in decoration. A brick chimney passed through the center. Trunks and boxes, never opened except at house-cleaning time, and kept only for that purpose, adorned the floor. Clothing, brooms, baskets, and bags hung from the rafters. Fruit-jars, syrup-cans, and honey-boxes covered the shelves; while clustering about the north window, looking out toward the milkhouse and the wooded hills beyond, was her outfit, consisting of chairs, an improvised desk, books, papers, pen and ink. Here she spent hours writing. Those were wonderful days up under that roof. The patter of the rain on the shingles, and the twittering of the birds in the evening twilight, were an inspiration. Occasionally, however, her flights of imagination are

suddenly interrupted. A sound from below reaches her ears. It is Norman passing under the window. Swinging his arm with heroic gesture over his head, he rings out:

“Write her deed high on the escutcheon of fame!

She deserves such a record—make place for her name!”

Then thrusting her head outside, she implores:

“O stop, or you will quench the fires of genius.”

“I would be sorry to do that,” says he. “The world can’t afford to miss the products of your pen.”

“Well, do let me alone, then, if you want my name on that ‘escutcheon.’”

“Adieu, adieu,” and, with a profound bow, he withdraws; while Charlotte settles back in her den.

Through all vicissitudes, however, she and Lawrence completed their tasks, and were graduated with honors from that historic institution.

Afterward there came a day that, for power to awaken tender memories, far surpassed even the time of their first ride to the academy. Though it had its joys and demonstration, it was a solemn occasion. There was a tinge of autumn on the leaves that morning, and a touch of pathos in the father’s prayer. Mother had risen early to pack the trunks. Such a wonderful mother! She never forgot anything, from a hair-ribbon to a dress waist. During the following years she often packed those trunks, and one day just before the train pulled off, she said: “There, I left out the pin ball! That is the first

time I ever did the like." How she managed to keep in mind the wants of eight children, and never miss so much as a necktie, was a mystery.

But returning to the day in question, Lawrence and Charlotte were going to college. When one of the neighbors had expressed his disapproval of spending so much money in the education of farmers' children, Mrs. Livingstone replied: "They might not remain in the country, and they would need all they could get successfully to compete with conditions in the city. Or, if they should come back to the farm, they would need it the more, to atone for the comparative seclusion in which they would live."

"But," said the farmer, "it is nonsense to put so much into your daughter's head."

Mrs. Livingstone answered quietly: "A liberal education for a girl is a gold-mine within herself. Having that, she will be less likely to seek entertainment in questionable ways. Though I have been unable to make the same use of my early training as others might have done, I would not be without its influence upon my life."

The farmer, knowing the woman to whom he spoke, had nothing more to say. As a matter of course, Lawrence and Charlotte were prepared for college. But it was not altogether easy to see the train leave the station, carrying them for the first time out into that world that was to test character.

But Mrs. Livingstone was not afraid. She believed in her children. And though she knew that some of the associations awaiting them would be wild and fascinating, yet there were the years at Maple Grove from which they could never get away. In their letters afterward they plainly indicated how the power of that early influence held them; for when the days were full of lights and shadows, or when the hills were aflame with gorgeous color, and the sunset was glorious, they knew how it was at Maple Grove, and wished themselves there; and when the wind whistled about their quarters and made the windows rattle, it thrilled them, for they thought of home. When the trees were bending and twisting under the blasts of winter, or the snow fell and blocked the entrance to the campus, they remembered the great drifts through which they used to tunnel on the hill west of the red schoolhouse. In all these memories there was the thought of the group about the lamplight, and the one ever-constant face. And she had faith in them.

CHAPTER IX

A DESERTED THRONE

It is now two years since that morning when the train rolled out of the village, taking Lawrence and Charlotte for the first time away to college. The autumn winds begin to blow. The haze upon the hills gives one the impression of something finished. This time four have gone on the morning train; for Norman and Lilian are in the company. To induce Lilian to go has required all the art of persuasion of the whole family. She felt more than did the rest what it would mean to their mother to see the flight of so many at once.

"Lilian is a saint, if there ever was one," said Charlotte.

"Yes, she is too much of a saint for her own good," added Norman, who recalled the numberless times that she had washed the dishes because Mary and Constance would rather pick wild flowers in the woods, and the occasional baking of a cake that Charlotte might go riding.

So, though it meant much to Mrs. Livingstone, she felt relieved when Lilian was finally prevailed

upon to go with the others. As they drove into the village that morning, they were hailed by Mrs Thornton, who wished Mrs. Livingtone to call, on the way from the train, as she wanted to talk with her. It was a very happy group of young people that waved good-bye to their mother on the platform, and a somewhat lonely but grateful woman that walked away from the station back into the heart of the village. But she had not been long in Mrs. Thornton's parlor before every shade of loneliness vanished, as she thought of her four children at home, in contrast with Margaret and Horace. There was a severing of the bond between mother and child distressing to see. The bloom of innocence upon Margaret's face was not as fresh as it once was, though not every one would have noticed the change. A hard look was in the eyes of Horace, as he came up the walk puffing a cigarette. Alongside these two she could not help placing her Leroy and Mary. So while she contemplated Mrs. Thornton's enviable social position in contrast with her own secluded life, she was not ashamed of the difference. In the eyes of others, however, it was very marked. Since schooldays, she herself had dropped out of sight, though she had by no means been idle in the pursuit of knowledge. Mrs. Thornton's influence, on the other hand, had been constantly growing until she had presided at important gatherings in the city, and, as was anticipated, she

was even mentioned as a candidate for the presidency of the State Federation. She certainly had a reputation above the ordinary. Her college sorority was proud to call her one of "our girls," and Alma Mater was honored by her name. Mrs. Livingstone saw all this, and felt that she herself could possibly have so excelled; but she would have had to desert her throne. Though not always easy to be contented, Mrs. Livingstone was now more than ever satisfied with her choice.

"I fear I made a mistake with Margaret the other day," said Mrs. Thornton.

"How so?"

"I let her go to the city last Sunday to hear Dr. Smithfield. She was captivated by his style. He soothed her by the music of his voice. And when he talked of the 'ideal splendor of a winter sun,' and of the 'skies sown with stars of every degree of exceeding magnitude—stars that panted and thrilled with glory,' she was ready to adopt his whole creed."

"You must regret it," said Mrs. Livingstone: "for she will need more than the support of 'The Church of This World' to carry her through." Then she thought of the hours upon hours that she herself had spent reading to her children, until their souls had been filled with the story of the Book. And having gotten her work in first, she had little to fear from any Dr. Smithfield.

Then Mrs. Thornton continued: "I have only noticed it of late; but I think Margaret is a little beyond me. Yet she used to be such an affectionate child. I never had any concern about her; Horace was the one that caused me trouble. She is not as choice of her company as she used to be. She was a perfect little lady and seemed to require no care, so I let her go about as she chose. When she first attended a parlor dance, I thought little of it, but she returned from the masquerade ball the other night, and is not the girl she once was. I had been to a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Home, and had not retired when she came. She did not care to talk with me about the way she had spent the evening, and went up-stairs without the kiss she used to be so ready to give."

"And," thought Mrs. Livingstone, "you were not always here to take." But she said nothing, and Mrs. Thornton continued:

"I followed her up-stairs, and through her door heard the prayer: 'Now I lay me down to sleep.' And I said, 'Will the Lord hear her?' When all was still, I slipped into the room, and looking into her face said to myself, 'If she should die before she wakes, will the Lord take her soul?'"

Mrs. Livingstone felt for Mrs. Thornton as only one mother can for another, and, having finished her call, went home.

A few weeks later, when the woods were all

aflame in the bright October sun, she left her own household for a day in charge of the "little girls," as they had been familiarly called. But Mary and Constance were repudiating that title of late.

As Mary once declared, "When we have to take the place of Charlotte and Lilian, certainly we are no longer 'little.'"

"Ah, Miss Livingstone, I believe!" said Leroy, with much assumed solemnity. "Allow me—"

"No, we'll not allow you!" interrupted Constance, vehemently. "If you call us 'little' again, you'll find out something!"

And she laid down the law to him so forcibly that he seldom attempted afterwards, except at a safe distance, to employ the odious appellation.

But occasionally he could not resist the temptation, and, soon after breakfast, would pop his head out from the barn loft, and call:

"O, say, little girls, is dinner ready?"

Constance would shout back at him, "No!" and flourish her broomstick in a decidedly belligerent manner, saying, "Come down, if you dare."

"Ha, ha, you can't hurt me, you little girl!"

Then he would pitch into the hay, and tumble it down onto the floor below, while Constance went back to deliberate with Mary, over the dishpan, as to the best way to get even with him.

Leroy was irrepressible. No one could well have indigestion with him at the table; for he kept them

in frequent uproar. When he spoke everybody expected to laugh. His career in the academy was unique. As a student he was sustaining the Livingstone reputation; but he was doing more. He was tall and fine-looking, and carried himself like a prince. Many a mother, seeing him walk the streets, had said, "I should be proud to call him my son." He and Mary were a picture as they rode behind their spirited black Cicero to and from the academy. The neighbors used often to watch them go by; and young people in Sunday-school sometimes would gaze at them until chagrined by their own rudeness.

That October day Mrs. Livingstone went to the city to see how her children at college fared. Such a rejoicing! She was taken to the campus, and shown through the new buildings; she was introduced to the professors, the oldest of whom she had known in her own college days; she was also taken along the shaded avenues to admire the splendid homes and parks, and finally to the art gallery to see the marvelous paintings and statues.

But nothing she saw or heard satisfied her more than the words of Professor Richards.

"Mrs. Livingstone," he said, "do you remember when I told you I thought you should become a public speaker?"

"I do," said she.

"Well," said he, "you could not have done a

better work than this," pointing to her sons and daughters.

Then she thought of what her husband had said that winter night when they were all about her. Lilian's face was beaming, for she seemed in an unusual way to feel what such a result had cost her mother.

The next morning, when Lilian bade that precious woman good-bye, she looked long and lovingly down the street, and turned to the others, saying: "We do not half appreciate our mother, I fear." At night, when the sun was sinking gloriously behind the hill, she stood with her face toward it in silence. They left her undisturbed, for they knew her thoughts were of home.

Mrs. Livingstone had stopped in the city during the day to trade, and had returned on the evening train to find Leroy, according to previous arrangement, awaiting her at the station. Then such a ride as they had out between the hills that stretched their dark forms up toward the starlight!

But before she had boarded the train that night she had seen and heard what filled her with apprehensions. She was standing by the gate, waiting for her ticket to be punched, when subdued voices reached her ear. Looking around, she saw a stout woman talking to a man with iron-gray hair. Never, to her latest breath, could she forget that woman's face, nor would she like to have those eyes

fastened upon her daughter. She heard a little of the conversation, for she could not help it.

"Some of the girls are very unruly," the woman was saying to the man. "I held one of them down to the floor with my foot last night, and took a strap to her."

Then something was said about a change of rooms. But, Mrs. Livingstone's ticket being punched, she was the first to take her place on the train. Presently this woman entered and took a seat across the aisle. She soon arose, however, and, approaching Mrs. Livingstone, said:

"Are you to stay in the car?"

"Yes," was the cool reply.

"Can I get you to watch my bundles? I want to buy some fruit."

A slight nod was the only answer. When she was gone, a uniformed young man—a messenger-boy, apparently—entered, accompanied by a sweet-faced young lady, for whom he was hunting a seat. The car was nearly empty, and yet he walked its whole length and back before he discovered the one for which he was looking. Then he placed her opposite Mrs. Livingstone beside those bundles, and disappeared.

"So this young fellow is in the game, too, is he? For shame!" This was Mrs. Livingstone's mental comment, and she looked at the girl, hoping for an opportunity to speak with her. At once, however,

upon the departure of the young man, the woman returned, and took her place as before. This cut off the possibility of Mrs. Livingstone's interference. She listened, however, for she felt she should. Above the noise of the train she only caught stray words, but heard enough to judge that the girl had an errand in the village; and she conjectured that the woman, also, would stop there. She saw, too, that though they had apparently been strangers, the girl was completely won and wholly at the mercy of her new acquaintance. Once Mrs. Livingstone arose and walked down the aisle and back, in the vain attempt to get the girl's attention. She rode in troubled silence to the end of her journey. What mattered it if her daughters were safe that night! Somebody's daughter was in peril, and others would follow if this woman had her way. She did stop in the village. Mrs. Livingstone, with throbbing heart, saw the girl and her companion step into a closed carriage and drive away down a side street. And that is why she had such a ride with Leroy that night out between the hills. For she told him the whole story. He listened with surprise and alarm. This was her opportunity. He had always been inclined to think everybody genuine; and his mother had seen that there was his danger.

CHAPTER X

THE FIRE UPON THE ALTAR

“O, IT is heaven out under those trees!” said Mr. Livingstone one warm summer morning, as he stood in the shade by the side porch near the stile. “I used to think that I would like to go West. But there are too many sacred associations ever to induce me to leave this place.” And the wind moved among the branches as though responsive to his appreciation. In the driveway, not too far to the east nor to the west, was a spot where the lights and shadows were perfect. Here, when day was breaking, with the tender green of the leaves above, the twittering of birds, and the distant view of the blue hills at the south,—here it was heaven, as near it as any place on earth could be. At least, there was not a dweller at Maple Grove but that thought it so. Once, when an uninitiated denizen of the city came and looked with calm coldness upon the scene, the Livingstones were disgusted. They forgot. Poor fellow! He could not help being born in the city; and if he had no soul for the beauties of nature, it was not his fault. Then, too, they

were looking upon their native hills. And who, under such conditions, could speak or feel impartially? But they never did understand how some folks could be so immovable.

Often Charlotte used to walk up and down the drive, and say with eager longing: "Can anything in all the world be like this?" She certainly never found aught to compare with it. And none of them ever could forget the delicious coolness under the shade of those maples, nor the old house, with its low, square rooms, hung with paintings and filled with choice books and magazines and comfortable furniture. Though most of them afterward lived in more modern apartments, with æsthetic surroundings; and some crossed seas and climbed majestic mountains, and from them beheld sunsets that were indeed far distant and were indescribably glorious, yet they never found a place where the "home feeling" was so unspeakably tender as in this house under the trees.

Long afterward, however, in looking back upon the scenes of those early days, it was not so much the memory of the trees or the house that held them. One picture above all others hung bright and beautiful. It was that of the fire upon the altar. They did not remember to have seen it go out, nor even grow dim. But in all the years since their earliest knowledge it had glowed with such steady light as to guide their footsteps over many a treacherous

way. There was nothing gloomy or severe, nothing formal or compulsory, about it. But as regularly as the sun rose over the eastern hill did the family gather in the sitting-room after breakfast for a chapter from the Word, a hymn, and a prayer. So faithful was Mr. Livingstone in sustaining this custom, that he had been known to return, after an hour's absence on account of refractory cattle, to take up the chapter where he left off.

Each, from the oldest to the youngest, had a Bible and read in his turn. The Psalms and Proverbs they liked. The story of Him who walked in Nazareth, for its simplicity; the Acts of the Apostles, for the spirit of conquest; and the Apocalyptic vision of St. John, were their favorites. The mystery of the last held them. "The four and twenty elders and the four beasts," "the dragon," the "great white throne," "the lake of fire," the opening of the "books" and the judging of the dead "out of those things which were written in the books," "the seven last plagues," the "new heaven" and the "new earth," "the holy city coming down from God," and the "Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing,"—all this, from their early recollection, filled them with awe and wonder.

Such singing as they had with Lilian at the organ! No one else could bring out the melody as she could. She put her whole soul into it. Floods

of rich song, they rolled forth at that time, which often echoed and re-echoed through the house and in the field during all the hours of the day. The hymn of the morning was the one that lingered upon their lips, and broke out at frequent intervals in unexpected quarters. From Charlotte's room upstairs would come,

“‘Nearer, my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee;’”

from mother's room,

“‘E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me;’”

above the throbbing of the engines in the milk-house, rising clear and beautiful, the father's voice,—O, how they used to listen; for he could sing,—

“‘Or if on joyful wing,
Cleaving the sky,
Sun, moon, and stars forgot,
Upward I fly;’”

and from the children in the meadow, the refrain,

“‘Nearer my God to thee,
Nearer to thee!’”

At night when the shadows covered the hills and fell about the maples, not one beneath that roof but responded to the sentiments of the hymn.

They seldom thought much about it at the time, but they would learn afterward that guests had gone

away greatly strengthened by those songs. One hymn, that was neither great nor old, but tender and beautiful under the touch of their harmonious voices, they often sang, as friends were about to leave:

“When you start for the land of heavenly rest,
Keep close to Jesus all the way;
For he is the Guide, and he knows the way best,
Keep close to Jesus all the way.”

They seldom stopped with two stanzas, but sung the whole four, closing with,

“We shall reach our home in heaven by and by.”

“It was worth more than a sermon, just to hear that song,” said a young man to Mr. Livingstone in bidding farewell. Because of it, a light penetrated the darkness that had fallen about him.

Once a wanderer had staid over night at Maple Grove. The reading that morning was of the young man who “took his journey into a far country.” The song fitted the occasion:

“Come home! come home!
You are weary at heart,
For the way has been dark,
And so lonely and wild:
O prodigal child!
Come home; O, come home!”

When they reached the refrain, the stranger rose and left the room; but they could hear him

sobbing outside. No one knew the desolate picture upon which he looked. And no one saw him walk back and stand under the window to hear the prayer in his behalf. But he heard it, and hearing, he said within himself: "‘I will arise and go to my father.’"

Those prayers it would have done any one good to hear. There was nothing in them about the "eternal decrees;" but Christ himself was there. And they seemed to look for him to walk with them during the day, to be their Friend, their Partner, their Burden-bearer, whether in the house or in the field. And it could easily be believed that an Unseen Presence hovered above each kneeling form. Then followed the Lord's Prayer in concert.

When Lawrence and Charlotte were grown, a different order was used. Mr. Livingstone, after having led the devotions one day, on the next would ask, "Mother, will you lead in prayer this morning?" And she would pray. There was always something in her petition about "the terrible curse of intemperance" and "our ministers, missionaries, and evangelists everywhere." The next day it would be, "Lawrence, will you lead in prayer?" And the next, "Charlotte will you?" And as soon as they were old enough, so on through the whole number, until it came father's turn again. Perhaps not even Mr. Livingstone himself realized in those days what he was doing. But his children did afterward.

An unusual custom once crept in, at Constance's suggestion. One morning, just before the prayer,

she said: "When we get through, let's shake hands; that's the way they do at meeting." And so, for a few weeks it was their wont every morning at the close of the usual devotions, to stand about the room, shaking hands and rolling out,

"Jerusalem the golden,"

or,

"Children of the heavenly King,
As we journey, let us sing."

The exercise was not at all profound, and a little irregular, it must be confessed. But it interested the younger children, and for their sakes was encouraged a while. In time it had served its purpose and was dropped.

Much candor of opinion was allowed; so Constance would occasionally offer criticisms, if anything did not suit her ideas of propriety. At about the age of four her sense of fitness was often shocked. One morning she surprised her father by saying:

"You did n't pray for me."

"Yes," said he, "I prayed for the family circle."

"I'm not the 'family circle!'" said she decidedly. "Maybe Caryl is, but I'm not."

After that there was something in the prayer about "our little Constance," until she grew older.

When Caryl came of age to appreciate the delights of outdoor life, he desired that the morning exercises be as much abbreviated as possible. He

would sit very patiently during the reading of the lesson. In the singing of the hymn he always took an active part; but when it came to the prayer he would manage to slip quietly to the one who was to offer it, and just in the act of kneeling, would whisper, "Make it short!" Probably he was thinking of his new kite or red wagon. It came so near upsetting Lawrence when the request was first made that he did "make it short," and, in the concert prayer that followed, could scarcely refrain from laughing. But they soon got used to the little lad's wish and occasionally accommodated him.

The time at the altar was not wasted. It seemed as though all were gathering force for the long hours before dinner. They would rise from that place with a light heart and a bounding step, and fall to work with a determination that was good to see.

A similar effect was sometimes produced upon their hired help. They once engaged an old man to paint the barn. The second morning something appeared to have made him young again, for he was laying the brush on with youthful vigor. They looked up at him. He was at the top of the ladder. Listen!

"Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer,"

And it seemed to them that the song must have been borne away to his "Father's throne."

At night, when this same man saw the children

gathered about the organ, he asked them to sing that hymn again. They sang; and it indeed called him "from a world of care." Later in the evening, thinking the household absorbed in something else, he slowly walked across the room, and took his seat at the instrument. He had been a country singing-master in an earlier day. Such playing and singing! His white locks fell upon his shoulders, and his clear tenor voice rose above the others until it seemed to reach heaven:

"Home, home! sweet, sweet home!

Prepare me, dear Savior, for glory, my home."

CHAPTER XI

BEHIND THE SCENES

"It just makes me provoked!" said Constance, coming in from the barn one morning.

"Well?" said her mother.

"I was talking with Leroy while he milked. I asked a thousand questions, more or less, about registering cattle; and Norman called out from the other end of the stanchion row that I would better rest my tongue, I was making the cows nervous."

"Never mind," said her mother; "you may be thankful some day that you have a tongue; though Norman's advice is not so bad. You will need to be careful not to be too talkative. It is well to keep some matters to one's self."

Constance understood, and flew to the kitchen to help prepare the breakfast; for two young ladies from the city were unexpectedly coming to dinner. Lawrence was asked to meet them at the train, then call for Mr. and Mrs. Long, and bring the four out to the farm. After Lawrence had gone, the girls were busy sweeping, dusting, washing win-

dows, arranging bouquets in vases, and doing any amount of unnecessary cleaning. The boys also were working with unusual speed, that they might have time to change their clothes before the arrival of the guests. Norman, who had met the young ladies at the university, said he did not care to look like a "hayseed."

Constance was ready an hour before time. She was never known to be late, though it would scarcely do, on all occasions, to stand her up before Mary for inspection. The family carriage sometimes stood at the door waiting for Mary some minutes. But when she did appear, lo! what a vision of loveliness; Norman thought that Mary would be improved by a little of Constance's energy.

Either the time that morning passed with unaccountable swiftness or Lawrence drove unusually fast. Charlotte had just brought towels and a basin of water into the dining-room, preparatory to washing the windows. Then she would dress. She had made the first application of the cloth to the glass, when Lilian ran in from the kitchen with the unexpected announcement: "They are coming!" Charlotte had time to rush out with her utensils, snatch an armful of clean clothes from the bars, get back to hide behind the dining-room door, while the carriage was passing the windows. Lilian had already gone up-stairs to join Mary. While the guests were alighting, Charlotte made good her escape, and fled

to her own quarters. Presently the young ladies and the preacher and his wife were seated in the family room, the only means of access to the stairs. Mrs. Livingstone and Constance did their best to cover up the absence of the others. Constance was making commendable use of her powers of entertainment just then, and Norman might have thanked her, for she rattled away at such a lively rate, and in so interesting a manner, as to give little opportunity for missing the others. Soon Charlotte and, afterward, Lilian and Mary appeared, bridging the embarrassment for the time.

Then a low whistle was heard under the window. It was the note of the quail, always used by the boys as a signal for Constance. She excused herself. There stood Leroy, the picture of bewilderment. He motioned her to follow him to the other side of the house.

"You will have to help us out," said he. "We can't go marching through that room, parading our brown shirts and patched overalls. And yet we shall have to get ready for dinner."

"I have it," said Constance, brightening after a minute's reflection. "I will go to father's room, and hand his clothes through the window. Then he can dress over the kitchen."

"Good!" said Leroy. "What about us boys? Go on."

"Put a ladder up to the window on the north

side of the house, and, when you and Norman have climbed in, Caryl and I will take it away. Then, after the others have been called to dinner, you can come down and casually walk in behind them."

"Agreed!" said Leroy, laughing, and stuffing his handkerchief in his mouth to keep from being heard.

A few minutes later a pair of pants, a coat, some stockings and shoes, were handed quietly out to Mr. Livingstone, who immediately repaired to the storeroom to make his toilet. Afterward, two rustic-clad figures might have been seen stealthily climbing a ladder, and disappearing through a window at the top, to reappear, shortly, at the dinner-table in the garb of gentlemen. Every one was on hand as though it were the most natural result in the world. But, once or twice, Leroy hit Constance's foot, and came near causing an explosion. This was averted, however, by a timely remark from the minister, giving occasion for a general laugh. Of course, no one noticed that Leroy and Constance found the joke unusually funny. Nor did any one think for a minute that their telegraphic glances had any hidden meaning. But after the meal, out behind the grape arbor, they indulged in a lively encounter of words.

"You see if I ever help you again!" said she. "You are the most ungrateful boy I ever saw. I wish I had introduced you to the young ladies just

as you were. I am sure Miss Nottingham would have been smitten by that big patch on your knee."

"O, come," said he, "do forgive me, and I'll not do it again till next time Mr. Long comes."

Then both laughed, and the scene ended. Reproof never hurt him any. It rolled off too easily.

That night, after the departure of the guests, the recital of the experiences of the morning were cause for much merriment. Here Leroy's gift for drawing was brought into use. He presented three pictures for their entertainment. They may have been somewhat exaggerated, but were certainly suggestive. "The Arrival," "Waiting for the Family," and "Behind the Scenes," were afterward put in the Livingstone archives.

Then one of those strange spells comes over them—the indescribable witchery of home. Their guests are gone. It has often been so before, after the departure of friends. It is a rebound from the jest and laughter of the day, and settles upon them with irresistible power. They are gathered in the family room. The evening lamp swings low from the ceiling, over a table of magazines and books. Upon the wall above the organ hangs mother's picture, between two deer-heads from the Adirondacks. For a time they sit in silence, with an occasional upward glance at the picture. Possibly they are thinking of the unbroken group under the lamp that night, and of the approaching separation. At

any rate, it is a scene to dwell upon, and one to which their thoughts will often turn in years to come. They are disposed to drink deep of their cup of blessing, for it may not long be theirs in the peculiar fullness of this night. So they pause over its brimming contents. They are passing through that wonderful experience in the history of a large and happy family,—that halo-crowned period just before the first break. It is a time when the hopes of youth beat high, and yet the joys of childhood linger; a time which, once passed, never returns.

At length, the stillness has wrought its work, and they become communicative. But what each one saw in those moments of silence, no one else knows. For “the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.” What “wild bewildering fancies” held the once “barefoot boy with cheek of tan,” as he listened “to voices in the upper air,” or what vision swayed the maiden,

“Standing with reluctant feet,
Where the brook and river meet,”

let no one ask; for only those may guess who have paused at the swelling of that river.

Finally, Lilian takes her place at the organ, and rolls out the chords of music with unusual volume, flooding the rooms of the old house with rich and harmonious melody. Then she takes up the hymns

with which they often close the day; and they sing on and on before finding a stopping-place.

Presently, Constance is found sitting apart, on a lounge across the room, looking with wistful eyes, and building castles such as only young girls know how to rear. Missing her, Mr. Livingstone walked over and sat down by her.

"What are you thinking of, dear?"

"Lots of things," she said, putting her hand in his, and with that peculiar, far-off light still in her eyes. Then he put his arm tenderly about her, and asked:

"Would you like a piano?"

"Yes, father, I would," she said.

While the others continued their singing, he sat calculating how to gratify her wish, and she remained silent beside him.

She had roamed the meadows, climbed trees, made friends with birds and squirrels, devoured books, shared the housework, helped in the hayfield, milked cows and ridden the horses. She had been ready to open gates, hunt eggs, and run on errands. The neighbors liked to see her come, for she had something sprightly to say. The boys always appealed to her to extricate them from difficulties; for she could see a way out, and she nearly always managed to accomplish what she undertook. When a very little girl, she had proceeded on the theory of success, and often got what she wanted where oth-

ers would fail. She had entered with all her soul into the joys of childhood. But the woman was wakening in her; and she would take up as earnestly life's new responsibilities. Yet she looked "on the river's broad expanse" with something of regret; for "the brooklet's swift advance" had often troubled her. She used to want to remain a baby, and did not like to see herself grow tall so fast. This bidding good-bye to girlhood was painful.

A few days before this, she sat beside an open trunk, packing away her doll-clothes.

"I hate to put them away," she said, "but I don't feel as though I want to play with them any more." And tears fell on her "Annie Laurie," of tender association. Shutting the trunk, and turning the key, she lifted a sorrowful face to Mrs. Livingstone, who undertsood and silently kissed her.

At another time, she commented on a book she was reading:

"I don't like this chapter," she said.

"Why?" asked her mother.

"Because the children all stop playing."

So she felt it deeply when she saw childhood slipping away, and knew life as something more than "riding down hill in winter, and picking flowers in summer." She sat close to her father that night, as if to steady her craft in its swift advance into the wider waters.

That was a great summer at Maple Grove.

Lawrence and Charlotte were preparing to return to college for the last time. Norman and Lilian were Sophomores, and, having a host of friends, were often regaled by tourists on wheel, who were sure that nothing could compare with Lilian's ice-cream and cake. Leroy had finished his course at the academy. But there were certain reasons why he must delay further progress as a student just at present. His father wanted one of the boys on the farm that year, and he was the only one available. Besides, he was in need of that kind of discipline. He ought to learn the difficulty of earning money, for he already knew how easily one could spend it. To help pay his own way would do him good. He did not take the remedy favorably, but afterward he felt better; and a year later, when he accompanied Mary to the university, he was stronger for it.

The Sunday evening before going back to college, Charlotte looked out from the window of her room. "O for the power to describe such a night!" said she. Pale moonlight was resting peacefully upon hazy hills. Thick shadows lay upon the lawn. Nothing broke the silence but the hum of insects and, later, the sound of distant church-bells. The little room that she had called hers through all these years! How could she think of leaving it, even for a few months? And that east window! Many a

night, sitting there with her head outside, had she listened to the crickets and the frogs, and feasted her eyes on the stately maples that seemed so tenderly to shut her in from all the worry and perplexity of the turbulent world.

"Lilian, come here," she called to her sister in the next room, "did you ever see anything like this?"

They sat some time without a word. Then Charlotte spoke:

"Could you imagine such another mother as ours? It is amazing. I know it is hard for her to see Lawrence and me go back for the last time. I can tell by her eyes. Yet she has not opposed a word."

"I know," said Lilian, who herself felt deeply at the thought of leaving her mother again. "When I mentioned it to her the other day, her face just shone. 'We must not feel that way, dear,' she said. 'That is what I have been working for. I wanted to go out to help win some of the world's battles, but I saw I must wait. Now Lawrence and Charlotte are nearly ready to go in my stead, and I am thankful. Soon you and Norman will follow.' But she hurried away just then, as though she felt more than she cared to show."

"This noon, after church," said Charlotte, "I came upon her coming out of the woods.

“‘This is hard,’ I said.

“‘No,’ said she, ‘this is easy. Let us not forget poor Mrs. Thornton.’

“‘Then we came down through the orchard together. And she talked. You know how she can talk. She made me feel it was all right.’

“‘Let me tell you, Charlotte,’ said Lilian, after an unusually long pause, ‘when I am through with school, I mean to come and stay with mother as long as she lives.’

Charlotte looked at her sister in silence, knowing that nothing would better accord with her quietly-heroic character than just such unpretentious service. Lilian scarcely realized then to what she was committing herself. But she never proved false to her voluntarily-accepted trust. Many who knew her brothers and sisters in the years of their public activity little guessed of the one who was supplementing the mother’s work in helping to keep the home bright. But some knew, and blessed her for it.

CHAPTER XII

ON THE VERGE

"THE last times keep coming," wrote Charlotte, the 1st of March in her Senior year. "We shall have no more class exhibitions after to-night. It is lonely to think of. I am glad the weather suits me. The air is full of flying snow. The wind fairly shrieks, and tears through the streets, rushes around the corners, shakes the houses, and roars away moaning in the distance. It is wild and sublime, and thrills me with the exhilaration of power."

Then she stopped soaring and came down to something practical. It was nearing graduation, and she wished mother would come up soon and approve her selection for a dress. She could have done it as well herself; but she wanted to talk of other questions that were not as easily adjusted. The answer to the letter carried the satisfactory information of a proposed trip the 18th of March.

As it proved, another trip to the city was also planned for that day. Margaret Thornton had developed into a strikingly beautiful young woman,

except for something a trifle deceptive in her face. It is feared that the society of the Progressive Club was partly responsible for that. And yet Mrs. Thornton had felt little uneasiness, for the girls were all from the best families in the village. Indeed, it was but recently that there was any apparent occasion for anxiety, and then, possibly, only in the case of Margaret.

A certain Carrie Jenness, said to be from New York, of unknown antecedents, but captivating manner, had set out to win the confidence of Miss Thornton. How she secured admission to the club, it is difficult to say. But she succeeded. Once in, her conquest was surer. Yet she had to work a long time, for Margaret had native virtues hard to conquer. At last she had her. Mrs. Thornton was then an easier victim. Carrie Jenness was charming. Her frequent calls at the home soon fixed the impression of her womanliness and sincerity. Then she could readily secure co-operation in any plan suggested. A walk in the early evening across the bridge and along the river proved to be full of innocent delight. The dancing moonbeams, falling water, and sighing pines, all the wonders of a summer night, would fill Margaret's soul as she saw them through the eyes of her friend. These quiet strolls, always ending early, had in them no suspicion of impropriety, at least not to Margaret. And any fear in Mrs. Thornton's case was allayed

at once upon the return of the girls, so skillfully did Carrie throw this mother off her guard.

After these occasional walks were no more matter of concern, the next step was easy. A ride to the Glen would be pleasant. Mrs. Thornton's offer of her blacks and coachman was rejected. A livery would be better. Consequently, soon after breakfast one morning, two handsome young women, Carrie Jenness the driver, sped up the valley past Maple Grove, to the lake north. It was a day to delight one's soul. The silver mist of the morning, rolling up from the valley and back over the hills, had floated in beautiful white clouds into the blue above. The woodlands were brilliant in gorgeous October hues. An invigorating breeze blew from the north. Carrie was a good driver. Her team soon covered the ten miles between the village and the Glen. One could scarce imagine a more bewitching picture than that of those two girls stopping in their carriage under the trees by the lake. The wind against which they rode had deepened the color in their cheeks, in keeping with the dazzling leaves above them.

Some light refreshments at the hotel prepared them for the following sail down the sixteen miles of lake. It was a ride to captivate the heart. At the west, precipitous, wood-clothed hills came down to the water's edge. At the east, sloping fields, dotted with farmhouses, rolled away to the hori-

zon. The lower end of the lake was near enough to the city to make it a favorite resort for wheelmen; and, though late in the season, it was not yet entirely deserted. By the time the young ladies landed, dinner had been ordered at the hotel for four. To state it moderately, it was a decidedly social occasion. And when the steamer pulled off from the wharf toward night, for the return up the lake, Carrie and Margaret were not alone, nor were they alone upon their homeward ride down the valley. The full moon, shedding its soft light upon the hills, looked out upon two carriages rolling hastily along the highway. As she came near Margaret glanced up at Maple Grove, lying so peacefully upon the slope. She would not have cared just then to meet the eyes of that good mother there. Though, possibly, if she could, she would have gladly changed places with her Mary. But she rode on.

When, a half hour later, she and Carrie stepped into Mrs. Thornton's brightly-lighted parlors, they soon dispelled that woman's forebodings by enlivening accounts of the drive, the strolls through the autumn-tinted woods, resting, and lunch at the hotel, and the return in early moonlight. But of the steamboat ride and what followed, not a word. They were playing their game, with Mrs. Thornton blindfolded. The further they went, the more shrewdly they played. What if this new friend were playing her game with Margaret also blinded!

The winter passed without unusual event. But Carrie Jenness was always on hand with plenty of leisure and money.

"Who is this Miss Jenness?" asked Mrs. Long one day of a caller.

"No one seems to know much about her," was Mrs. Vinton's reply. "To a careless observer she appears very delightful. But money and leisure in the possession of a young girl who gives no explanation of her presence here are causing unfavorable comment."

"But Mrs. Thornton shows no concern," said Mrs. Long.

"There is the difficulty," replied Mrs. Vinton. "When less influential ladies see a social leader allowing such intimacy, they feel helpless. What can they do?"

Some of them realized afterward what they should have done, and could scarcely forgive themselves for lack of courage to speak their convictions. But Mrs. Vinton saw where Margaret was drifting, and determined to make an effort to save her. It was a time of spiritual awakening in the village Church. Upon leaving Mrs. Long's that afternoon, she chanced to meet Margaret, and, taking her by the arm, strolled down the street. Mrs. Vinton was one of those gentle, saintly women who won the respect of all who knew her.

"Margaret," she said, after a brief pause in con-

versation, "I hope you will not let this opportunity pass. You might lead such a beautiful life for Christ. Besides, there is so great danger in delay."

"Yes, I know," said Margaret, thoughtfully.

"So many of your friends," continued Mrs. Vinton, "have chosen the better way, and are earnestly praying for you."

"They have told me so more than once," was the reply.

"Then you will not sleep to-night until you have settled this question?"

Margaret had been profoundly impressed by the solemn warnings from night to night, and, for a week, had given serious consideration to the sacred claims, and had almost yielded; for she knew her own peril. So she said to Mrs. Vinton:

"Yes, I will settle it to-night."

"May God help you!" was the fervent reply. And, believing further words unnecessary, she smilingly went on her way.

Margaret, turning the corner up the main street, hastened her steps toward home. "Yes," she was saying to herself, "I must decide to-night. Longer suspense is unbearable."

The frequent importunities of her friends and the final appeal from Mrs. Vinton were about to bear fruit. So it might have been, but, coming down a cross street just then, Carrie Jenness met her. She had witnessed the earnest conversation

with Mrs. Vinton, and improved the first opportunity to counteract her influence.

"Why so sober?" she said cheerily. "What has come over our gay Margaret? You can't afford to spoil your handsome face this way."

Then Margaret smiled, and, scarcely knowing it, was at Carrie's mercy.

"This won't do," went on her companion. "Just as though you were not already good enough! If you were like other young people, it might be well to repent. But you are naturally perfect."

Although Margaret knew this to be untrue, and deeply felt her own need of a better heart, she had not the courage to insist at that time. She was strangely under the power of this girl.

"Mrs. Vinton is a lovely woman," continued Carrie; "but you yourself know that she is not very broadminded. She stays here in this little village. What does she know about the outside world? She is not the one to give you advice. Your own mother would admit that."

This statement was untrue, for Mrs. Thornton knew and respected the cultured and noble Mrs. Vinton. But Carrie grew bolder, as she saw how ready Margaret was to accept her words, and even ventured ridicule.

"You must n't allow yourself," she said, "to be influenced by these goody-goody saints. You're no Sunday-school baby." Again she resorted to

flattery. "You can easily command the respect of brilliant people. There is no need of being content with such humdrum folks as Mrs. Vinton and Mr. Long. I never met any one for whom I cared as much as I do for you, and I want you to see something of the world with me."

They stood now at Mrs. Thornton's gate. "Carrie was smiling her sweetest. "Give yourself time," she said, "and you'll get over these notions. I know you will not disappoint me. I can trust you, my dear." Then, as she turned away, "I'll be in to see your mother to-morrow morning. I have a lovely plan for you and me, that I am sure she will like. Good-bye."

Mrs. Thornton was out, and would not be in till dinner, an hour later; so Margaret settled in a chair before the drawing-room grate, and was alone with her thoughts. Calling to mind the words of Mrs. Vinton and Carrie, she said to herself:

"I promised to settled it to-night, and I will; but I can not turn Carrie away. She is too irresistible. A few years of sightseeing won't harm me. So I'll not go to church this evening. Mrs. Vinton will miss me, but may think I am sick."

Thus finishing her soliloquy, she turned to the piano, and rattled off a frivolous air.

Mrs. Vinton did miss her, and was much distressed by her absence from the service, which was of deep spiritual power. Though she diligently

sought to speak with her, she did not succeed until a week later, when she called at her home. By that time, however, her words had little weight. Finally, rising to go, Mrs. Vinton, with tears in her eyes, took Margaret's hands in hers, and said:

"Remember, I shall continue to pray for you."

"Thank you," was the reply, "though I fear it will not do much good." And, somewhat sadly, she watched from the window the departure of this true friend.

The morning after meeting Margaret, Carrie Jenness had called, as she proposed. It was Mrs. Thornton's custom to go to the city every season for a supply of clothing, hats, shoes, and gloves.

"Mrs. Thornton," said Carrie, soon after being seated, "why not let Margaret and me buy the Easter hats this spring? It would be a good experience for us. We could go to the city on the morning train, and be back in the afternoon. We would need only a few hours. Later in the season you could go for your usual shopping."

"I see no objection," was the reply. And the plan was fixed.

When the day came, Carrie called for Margaret. Then they bade good-bye to Mrs. Thornton, and walked down the street.

She looked after them, till she saw them turn the corner toward the station. Then she lifted her eyes upon Mrs. Livingstone, riding in the same

direction. That is how those two trips to the city came on the 18th of March.

The young ladies did not stay in the waiting-room, and so were not seen by Mrs. Livingstone until the train pulled out. They being at the farther end of the car, she only recognized Margaret, presuming the other to be a friend. The city reached, the girls hurriedly left, but not before Mrs. Livingstone had a good look into Carrie Jenness's face. She was startled. When she had sufficiently recovered herself her opportunity was gone. The girls were nowhere to be seen. She felt impelled to put an officer on their track, though perhaps she had no right. Then, too, a sudden dread seized her on account of Charlotte and Lilian, awaiting her coming at the university, and she hastened on. But the face of that girl! She had seen it before. And she recalled with great vividness the return from the city a few months previous, and the disappearing of this girl with a woman in the darkness, down a lonely street of the village.

It was nearing time for the afternoon train from the north. Mrs. Thornton, though not openly opposing the plan of the girls, had yet felt a little reluctance, and had been on the point of calling them back before they passed through the gate; but she did not know what to say, and let them go. Now she was pacing the floor, anxiously awaiting their return. The locomotive whistled. Her

heart beat fast. She never remembered to have passed so weary a day. She walked to the window. The girls would be there in at least twenty minutes. She looked at the clock. Ten minutes passed; fifteen minutes; then twenty. She looked down the street. Twenty-five minutes! They may have stopped at the post-office. Thirty minutes! An hour! Then Mrs. Thornton gave up. They must have been detained in the city. That would be natural. Buying Easter hats was always slow. But the next train would not be in before eleven o'clock, and she must wait for that. The coachman was ordered to have the carriage ready. She herself would meet them at the station. She was to have presided at a banquet that evening, but sent her regrets. Sickness prevented. After dinner, Mrs. Thornton tried to compose herself for the hours until traintime. Her husband having dined in haste, had returned to the office, and had not detected his wife's agony. She was so uniformly self-possessed that there was seldom need for his encouragement.

Presently Horace came in with two or three companions, and went up to the third floor, where he often entertained his friends. Up there were the necessary arrangements for convivial gatherings—a billiard-table, a smoking-room, and, if anything else was lacking, he could easily supply it. The table was put there to “keep her boy at home.”

What followed was natural. The hours dragged heavily. The sounds from up-stairs were not soothing, and once she was on the point of investigating, but she did not. Mr. Thornton could better do that later. Besides, she was anxious about the next train.

Eight o'clock! Nine o'clock! At that time she knew her club sisters were gathered for the banquet. How small a place she seemed to hold in the club world just then! All the heroic effort of past years rose up to mock her, and appeared but "vanity of vanities." Not that it lacked merit; but she had deserted her throne to accomplish it. Ten o'clock! The coachman was ordered out. She could wait no longer, and was at the station forty-five minutes ahead of the train. From that time until after the whistle announcing its coming, a woman, full of self-condemnation and remorse, paced back and forth upon the platform. The coachman had tried to persuade her to go within, but to be out in the night suited her better. At sight of the engine her heart leaped, for she was longing to clasp Margaret in her arms. But, hold! the train has stopped. Several passengers step off and take the 'bus for the hotel. What! The engine begins to throb and slowly moves out into the darkness. No Margaret! And no train returns to the city till daylight.

At home again, she continues pacing back and forth, through all the rooms down-stairs, then up

in Margaret's room, then in her own. No sleep for her that night! Those returning from the banquet saw a light in her window, and hoped she was not seriously ill. Twelve o'clock! She started. If she could have seen her daughter at that moment—but heaven spared her that affliction!

CHAPTER XIII

TOO LATE

TWO YEARS have wrought a great change in that stately home in the village. The brilliantly-lighted windows are now darkened. Seldom any one passes through the gate, either coming or going. Few are welcomed. Mrs. Livingston, however, occasionally goes. But even she appears to carry small comfort to the lonely woman dwelling there. All she can do is to listen again and again to the story of remorse. It was a remorse so deep as to have produced almost incurable melancholy. For Mrs. Thornton was usually found, as the night she waited for the train, tirelessly pacing the floor back and forth, back and forth, until it wearied one to look at her. Then she would pause in front of Mrs. Livingstone with the oft-repeated words: "I took too much time from my children. Now they are beyond my reach. It is too late!" And she would pace the room again.

"O, I thought the world needed me. Now see what I have given to the world. I would better not have been born, for all the good I have done." Then more pacing!

"If I could find my Margaret I would forgive her all. What did I do? what did I do?" she would moan. "If we could only get away from our thoughts!" Then, after a little, "But night and day I think and think of Margaret—no one knows where she is—and of Horace. He is growing so reckless. He does not seem to care much for me; and he does not look like the innocent little back-eyed boy that rode up to see your baby."

Mrs. Livingstone found it hard to listen, for it did seem so much as though it might have been different. She would try to put in some comforting word, but in vain.

After that terrible night of waiting two years before, Mrs. Thornton had gone early in the morning to the city. There she found traces of her daughter, but also became convinced that she had left for some distant place. She did not learn till afterward that, instead of ten dollars, Margaret had taken one hundred from her father's safe. From that day all the light went out of Mrs. Thornton's life. She was a changed woman. With never-ceasing diligence she sought to find the wanderer. She learned of her being in Cleveland, in Chicago, and, she thought, in Denver. But that was all she could ascertain. In vain during the long winter evenings she listened for a footfall upon the porch. In vain she kept her lamp burning until late into the night, in the hope that Margaret, re-

turning, might know there was welcome. In vain she wrote inquiries and read newspapers for some clue. Since that ominous 18th of March two luxuriant summers and two cold and snowy winters had passed over the quiet village; and the joyous Easter-time was again bringing home to many a heart, but it brought no Margaret.

Mr. Thornton was not of much consolation to his wife. He once said to Mrs. Livingstone: "I used to tell my daughter what was right, and, if she had a mind to go wrong, it is not my fault."

"That is," replied Mrs. Livingstone, "you put your daughter into the fire, and told her not to get burned; if she did, it was her fault. You should have tried, if possible, to keep your children out of danger. Then, if they fell, you would have done your part."

But she rather regretted the reprimand. For what good could it do now! She never would have said it to Mrs. Thornton. But his indifference moved her. When she thought how careless fathers and mothers are about the guideboards, she did not wonder at the multitudes of boys and girls going over. But it was sickening. And she felt like ascribing honor to the woman, however humble or poor or unlearned she might be, who had convictions, and courage to stand by them for the good of her children.

One night, Mrs. Thornton fell into a troubled sleep, in which she gazed upon a frightful scene. She saw Margaret and Carrie as they had looked that October morning before the ride to the Glen, pictures of health and beauty. In her dream it was moonlight. The girls were tripping, hand in hand, thoughtlessly along a mountain highway, until, without knowing of danger, they suddenly stood upon the edge of a precipice overhanging the rocky shore of a lake. In her dream she was horrified. Yet as they passed her, with loosely-flowing hair and sparkling eyes, they were lightly singing:

“Sowing the tares when it might have been wheat.”

Mrs. Thornton awoke with a start. She saw what the dream meant and told it, a few days later, to Mrs. Livingstone, remarking afterward that surely she would hear from Margaret.

In a week she received a letter from a matron of one of the “homes” in Denver, stating that a girl, known as “Mag” had been brought there from one of the resorts of the city, and advising her if she wished to see her alive, to come quickly, though it might do no good, for the girl seemed like a demon. The earliest possible train, however, carried Mrs. Thornton toward the West. Past richly-blooming orchards and green wheatfields, over river and beside lakes, she sped. But she

cared for none of these. Her daughter was leaping the precipice! She felt that she could not stop her plunge. Yet she would make one last effort. Reaching Chicago, hundreds of miles of prairie still lay between her and her lost girl. It was a long and dreary ride. At length the train pulled into Denver, and she was hastily driven in the darkness to the Home mentioned in a secluded part of the city, and, on presenting her card, was promptly admitted.

The assistant hastened to say: "We rather hoped you would not come. For I fear there is no use for you to see her. She is so wild."

"O, I must see her! Take me to her quick!" said Mrs. Thornton, almost fainting from long anxiety and grief.

She was reluctantly led through the hall, up the stairs, to a small room in the farther corner. The door was quietly opened.

The place was clean, but barely furnished, the better portions of the house having been already occupied. A single bed stood upon the bare floor. Three straight-backed chairs and a little table, upon which were a lamp and a few books, made up the remaining articles. Closed shutters at the two small windows kept out the starlight. But no drapery or other adornment relieved the white walls. Margaret was reclining on the bed, her head resting on her hand, a faithful nurse watching beside

her. Upon entering, Mrs. Thornton nearly dropped. What a change from the beautiful Margaret of two years before, in her own large and splendidly-furnished home to this repulsive Margaret, in the poor little cheerless room, away in a Western city! The contrast was shocking. Mrs. Thornton stood halting upon the threshold before gathering courage to enter. Margaret looked up, and seeing her mother, glared at her, as if recognizing the woman who had led her astray, and demanded: "Why did you come here? Go away!"

"O, Margaret darling," said Mrs. Thornton, stepping toward her, "do n't you know me? Come, and I will forgive you all. Come, and forgive me."

Such yearning in that mother's eyes was hard to see. The girl was now sitting up boldly, her long black hair in the wildest disorder, her dark eyes fiercely gleaming, her hands clinched, and she herself in the posture of a beast about to leap upon its prey. Mrs. Thornton hesitated, for very fear, yet held out her hands in supplication.

"Come," she pleaded, "come, my daughter." And in her voice and manner were all a mother's heart of love.

Margaret's attitude was terrific.

"Back!" she hissed. "Do n't you see I'm a devil?" And her hideous roar filled the house. The very mouth of hell seemed yawning. It was easy for those onlookers to believe in the abode of the

lost, and in the personality of the archfiend. He had this girl in his awful grip, and was relentlessly dragging her down. No power on earth could stop him. They almost thought they could hear his demoniac laugh, and they shrank as though they themselves were in danger. She was becoming so fierce that two strong attendants could scarcely hold her. She pulled at the bedding until it was in a tumultuous heap. Then she began to catch up imaginary weapons and hurl them at her mother, demanding that she "get out!" until it became necessary for Mrs. Thornton to conceal herself behind the door.

"If she had n't gone, I would have killed her! If it had n't been for her, I would n't be here to-night." Then her infernal laugh rang through the hall. Afterward she became more calm, but still mistook her mother for that dreadful woman who, three and a half years before, had ridden down the dark street of the village, and who, with Carrie Jenness as her tool, had shrewdly set the trap for this girl's virtue. Margaret became very talkative. And, if there is any truth in her statements, upon coming to the city that dreadful day, she and Carrie had been taken into a closed carriage and driven hurriedly to this woman's apartments. She had never seen Carrie since, but that night was taken, upon promise of a brilliant career, by this woman herself on board a west-bound train to Cleveland.

After a few months of wretched existence she was sent to Chicago, and finally to Denver. The rest of the story her rescuers told. They had found her, the week before, over a third-rate saloon, in a frightful state of intoxication. Some indistinct writing on certain papers she carried revealed the address of Mrs. Thornton, and led to the communication with her. It was too late to save Margaret, yet it might be some consolation to her mother to know that Christian hands had tenderly administered care in her dying hour.

The girl's fury had now passed, and, exhausted, she lay among the pillows apparently asleep. Presently she started up. She was very weak and seemed not to know any one. Then her mother ventured to come forth. How she longed to speak and clasp her daughter, repulsive though she was, to her heart! But she forbore, dreading the return of that horrible raving. Margaret appeared to have lost something, and was looking for it among the bedclothes.

"I can't find it," she said. "Where is it; that book?"

Then her mother handed her a volume of poems from the table.

"No," said Margaret, "that is not the one. It was the Bible I wanted. I can't find it."

Then Mrs. Thornton brought a copy of the New Testament. Margaret took it eagerly, and sat for

a long time with glazed eyes, poring over its pages. She was pitiful to see. Her sight fixed upon the book, yet seeming to pierce beyond it to the turbulent stream before her!

At length she spoke with great difficulty. "‘Who resist,’" said she, recalling a line from Bickersteth, once read in her innocent girlhood. "‘Who resist—the blood-stained—cross, resist—resist—the—utter—most—uttermost that Heaven—can—do!’" Then so long a pause, they thought she had gone.

"O"—they listened—"I am lost! I am lost!"

One breath, and the chimes in the cathedral tower tolled three.

After that, every morning during all the long summer, a desolate woman in the village, dressed in deep mourning, was seen to walk toward the west and the south, until she came to an abrupt slope, where the "dead people rest." Passing through the iron gate, along the gravel walks, by the vaults and stately shafts, among the evergreen trees, she would climb at length to the farther limit of the grounds, in the edge of the woods. Here she would bend over a lonely grave, and drop choice flowers from a basket she carried on her arm. It did not count for much then. The flowers ought to have been scattered years before. But it seemed in some mysterious way to dull a little the edge of her sor-

row. So, through rain and sun, in all the months that followed, until frost came, Mrs. Thornton made her daily pilgrimage to that hillside grave. And every time she stood looking upon it she seemed to see Margaret's face, with her lips moving. And these were the words she heard:

"Who resist
The blood-stained cross, resist the uttermost
That Heaven can do."

CHAPTER XIV

HER WIDENING INFLUENCE

THE ever-constant maples still shelter the old house. The winds blow up the valley and stir their multitudinous leaves. The robins build nests in their branches. The sun shines by day, and the stars look out by night. Or sometimes the rain patters on the roof of Charlotte's "den." The brook sings over pebbles in the meadow. The crickets chirp and the frogs croak as before. Every morning, the same as a score of years ago, the throbbing in the engine-house sounds a note of industry in the quiet valley, while herds of cattle pasture on the slopes. To the wheelman passing along the highway, nothing differs much from conditions of that bright May morning when Mrs. Livingstone smiled upon the flight of her three-year-old Constance out upon the dewy lawn. Outwardly there is not much alteration. But there is a change within. And sometimes, to those who feel it most, it is not altogether a pleasant change. Yet it is one that comes to every household—a time when children's prattle is hushed, when their toys are put away, when their

feet no more come tripping from the woods with wild flowers for mother, nor their songs and merry laughter ring through the fields. It is a time when childish sports give way to the mature plans and the life problems of busy men and women.

Such a change has come to Maple Grove. And now the old familiar call of the early morning, "Co, bos! co, bos!" has in it something inexpressibly sad to those who listen. Whether it is the lonely rolling of the sound over the hills, or the calling up of a thousand memories of other days, that strikes the minor chord, can not be told.

The change has touched father and mother, too. For they begin to show age. Yet the stray white hairs and the few wrinkles of the face are but marks of completeness for their coming translation. Mother has not as many cares as when her boys used to come whistling up from the meadow with buttons off or suspenders broken. Father has fewer interruptions than when he had kites to make and sleds to mend. Their evenings now are quiet and undisturbed. They can read books, attend lectures, or visit friends, as inclination prompts. There is time also for certain benevolent activities before impossible. Business conditions have likewise changed. The development of their butter-trade has brought to an end the days of close economy.

Mary is teaching in the village academy. Constance and Caryl are away at college. Constance is

already fulfilling the prophecies of her earlier years. Her imaginative faculty, which, we may believe, helped to lead her into many a disgraceful falsehood, now makes her the most interesting writer in her class. Her early collection of fossils on the farm makes her observations in botany of more than ordinary value, while her ability to read character, early evinced in her comments on the neighbors, has served her in good stead in selecting friends among her classmates. When she once determined to go to college, no one felt much doubt of her getting through, remembering her habit of doing what she undertook. Her executive ability proved to be greater than that of any of her sisters. Although she has often declared her determination to marry neither a minister nor a missionary, but somebody rich and handsome, her purpose seems weakening of late. For a tall, somewhat angular individual, of large soul and commanding intellect, has often, during the summer vacation, wheeled from the city to Maple Grove. He has a heart for those trees. And then a hammock swings beneath them, and sometimes a tall young woman with golden hair and blue eyes rests there. Somehow he likes to sit beside her. From the parlor window mother looks out and smiles, and is satisfied. Though he is neither handsome nor rich, yet he is doing what he can to point the way for those with "burdens upon their barks." Maybe Constance will

thus do some of the work reluctantly passed over by her mother. If so, what greater reward could be asked for the years of patient training?

Leroy always had manifested mechanical genius. Even as a boy he won a neighborhood reputation as a builder of straw-stacks. They never fell over. Men used sometimes to come for miles across the hills to hire him. Then, too, such marvels of cabinet work as he turned out of his father's shop! The dolls of Constance and Mary always had an assortment of tables, beds, and chairs of his manufacture. Having taken a course in electrical engineering, he had recently accepted a position in Kansas as superintendent of construction. He soon found a girl of the Sunflower State to his liking, and a picture of his six months' old Mary now adorns the mantel at Maple Grove.

After three years as missionary among the Indians of North Dakota, Lawrence came east for his bride, making a short stay, and returned with her to his work in the Northwest. Friends that visit the old home are shown pictures also of two of the sweetest little girls, Lucretia and Lilian.

Charlotte taught one year in Iowa. Then her college president thought he had more need of her in his home, and she willingly accepted the change, making a trip back to the farm for the needed preparation. Maple Grove never was so beautiful to her as during that summer, because she had ears

to hear and eyes to see. For what more than the making of a trousseau gives music to babbling brooks, deepens foliage on the trees, and enriches moonlight on the hills? Certain it was, that while she put stitches into her wedding garments, she read new meaning in the forests and meadows, the sunshine and rain. When the tints were on the trees, she intrusted this bit of confidence to her journal: "These days are full of beauty to me, since they continually bring me nearer my sweetest earthly joy." Thus the summer and early autumn passed. And one day, when the woods were ablaze with color, she rode down the drive, from under her beloved maples, as she had never gone before, out into that mysterious and untried world of tenderest human joys and sorrows.

Seven years have passed since then. There came to the Iowa home a little spirit that tarried for a brief space, and one winter night, soon after Christmas-tide, flew from its cage back to the bosom of the Father. In the morning the message flashed over the wires to Maple Grove was this: "Our Evaline is with Jesus." And, all day long, a mother-heart in that old home was thinking of her daughter in the West, with arms empty, listening in vain for the sound of little feet. She was thinking also of the fields of light, and of the presence there of One "who never knew a touch of sinful grief," whose face, radiant with celestial love and beauty,

would, in time to come, smile to them a welcome home. But she wrote to Charlotte, "I am so glad you brought her here last summer," and such other words as Mrs. Livingstone knew how to write. Now little Lawrence and Gertrude occupy a large place, and sometimes are more than a match for their mother's wisdom and patience. They certainly have been the occasion of the breaking of some previously-formed rules for the management of children. Charlotte has much less positive knowledge upon the subject than formerly.

Norman gives the impression of being a fixture on the farm. His executive ability might be coveted for other occupations; but, like his father, he is wise enough to see the possibilities of intelligence applied to country problems, and, with his youthful determination, makes a successful manager in the already extensive business. Any reference to his delay in matrimonial affairs will draw from him the solemn declaration that a man of twenty-nine years is too immature and inexperienced for so serious an undertaking.

Lilian is still mindful of the purpose expressed to Charlotte a few years before, and is content with the exercise of domestic virtues in her childhood home. Neither she nor her parents, possibly, realize fully what she is to them. But it is probable that her father would eye pretty sharply any fellow that would be coming to see her.

More than six years again pass. Caryl has returned from the theological school, where he has taken the course since leaving college. This is the first night home, and in the twilight of the evening he is alone with his mother on the front porch. He sits at her feet with his head in her lap, while she smooths his hair and looks into his blue eyes. She seems to be reading something. After a few minutes of silence, he says:

"Do you know it, mother?"

"Know what, my boy? I think you want to tell me something."

"Yes, listen, mother. I am sure you will not be displeaded. I want to do what I can to help folks that are down. I had hoped to continue work among the poor and degraded in Chicago. But I have noted so often the unavailing effort to secure additional men for our work in foreign lands, that I feel impelled to go myself, if I am wanted. May I?"

He waited, looking steadily into her face. And the birds twittered, and the brook in the meadow sung its song. The hills in the gathering shadows seemed to rise higher and come nearer. He wanted his answer. The touch of her hand was tenderer, the light in her eye was deeper, as she said simply, "I am not surprised. I expected it."

Then they sat long in silence. And she was thinking of the time, now a quarter of a century ago, when, for Caryl's sake, she so nearly crossed

over. "Is this that largest joy?" she thought. The full moon peeped over the eastern hill, and sent its beams through the maples to the porch where they sat. After a while he lifted his eyes to hers again.

"What is it, Caryl? I see you have not told me all."

"No, not all." Then he waited, not knowing how to tell her. "I do not want to go alone. There is one I am sure would like to go with me, if I would ask her."

"Yes," said his mother; but this time her answer had not the ring that he liked.

"You do not approve," he said at length.

Still no answer, except for the pain in her eyes.

"Mother," said he, suddenly sitting erect, "how can I give her up? I can not bear to think of life without her."

His mother stooped and kissed him.

"Let us walk," she said.

So, arm in arm, up and down the drive, they went. A light wind stirred the leaves to sighing.

"O mother," said he, "what a lament the trees are making to-night! They seem like those seeking the lost, and unable to be quiet from longing."

A hush, and then the wind would rise and call again, as if it must be heard. It was as though the heart of the trees beat in sympathy with his heart. Through the wavering leaves the moon lighted his face.

"Caryl," said his mother, "it is not that I object to Irene."

"I know," said he, "that you are thinking of her high social position. But with her refined and beautiful mother and the others of her family of such noble character, and she herself an angel"—and his voice was full of yearning—"it could hardly be that she would ever weary of the life that I would lead her."

"No, it is not probable," said Mrs. Livingstone; "but it is possible that she might find the way too severe. She has never known what it is to have a wish ungranted. But Caryl, you are a man. I must not oppose you. I simply express my fear. Certainly you could not find a truer or more beautiful woman than Irene."

"Then, mother, if I may, I will bring her up to Maple Grove to-morrow. She is visiting an aunt in the village, and will not return to the city until next week."

The following day as fair a guest was entertained at dinner as ever graced the table at Maple Grove. If it had not been for Caryl, Lilian would have appropriated Irene. He tried to be generous, however, and left her with his mother and sister till the middle of the afternoon. And it must be confessed that Mrs. Livingstone's doubts vanished, and she was won over to Caryl's belief that in one so pure and lovely there could scarcely lurk the



HAND IN HAND, LIKE CHILDREN. AFTER FLOWERS

poison of worldly ambition. Lilian and their guest were swinging in the hammock. Caryl entered the parlor to his mother.

"May I make a request?" said he. "Would you mind if I should take her to your altar in the woods?" And the color rose in his face.

"No, no," was the reply, "take her there if you like."

Then he walked out across the drive to the hammock.

"May I claim Irene a while?" he said to Lilian.

"Certainly. I did not mean to be selfish."

They made a picture as they stood by the pasture-gate, waving adieu. His blue eyes and abundance of light hair were in contrast with her dark hair and eyes. She was dressed in white, with a ribbon of delicate pink at her throat and waist, and could not have been more bewitchingly attired. Up the green slope they went hand in hand, like children after flowers. He swung a basket on his arm, for he knew where the ferns grew. Under the trees in the old orchard they passed, and then through another gate into the grove. Here they paused, as nearly every one does, to look out between the trees along the valley to the village. The foliage on all the hills was rich and full. The tender green of the late grainfields and the darker hue of the meadows were soft and beautiful in the afternoon light. Soon they struck the path leading into the

denser woods, and followed it arm in arm, now, toward the stone altar. Various fern-clusters lifted their fronds between the roots of trees. Now and then a belated Jack-in-the-pulpit stood by the way. Over their heads the squirrels chattered and the birds chirped. The basket hung empty on Caryl's arm. The slanting sunbeams fell through the trees. But all the music and poetry of nature were vain, just then, for Caryl and Irene. He had intended to wait till they reached the altar. But by the time they stood before it, he had put the question, and received the answer. Two smooth stones were found side by side. Here they sat down. Then they heard the birds and squirrels, and saw the sunlight.

Afterward they walked farther into the woods to a gurgling brook flowing down a ravine, and, sitting upon a boulder, listened to the falling water.

"Let us shut our eyes," said Caryl, "and hear what the brook says." And the ripple, ripple, ripple over the stones set flowing the tenderest thoughts. They were thoughts of childhood and forest flowers, thoughts of mature manhood and womanhood and plighted love, and of future years of joy and growth. They sat a while listening and talking and watching the dancing leaves of the maples and beeches over their heads. Then they strolled up and down the steep sides of the gorge, filling their basket with ferns. Presently they came to a gate at the western edge of the woods. Leaning

upon this with their faces toward the sun, they watched the king of day plunge gloriously into the horizon. Irene still had her eyes intently fixed upon the celestial splendor, when Caryl turned toward her. He thought she belonged beyond the sunset, so transformed by its glory did she seem.

"O Irene," said he, drawing her nearer, "it is cruel to take you away from this beautiful land. You love it so. But I feel I must go, and I can not go without you."

"It would be more cruel not to take me," said she, with such a radiant smile as satisfied his heart.

Then they walked through the gate toward the glow in the west, up through the meadows and out upon the highway above the limit of Maple Grove farm. It was the distant view they wanted. Then facing about, they began their long and slow descent toward the valley. The eastern hills, veiled in blue mist, rose tier on tier. By the time they reached the orchard-gate to cross the pasture toward the house, the moon was climbing over those maples and filling the lawn with thick shadows. Supper was spread for them in the dining-room, as they were too late for the family meal. And their feast was bread and milk, with strawberries and cream.

Afterward the front porch seemed to have been purposely left for them. And there they sat and talked and talked of all they hoped to do to help

make this world better. The wavering moonbeams crept down through the leaves. Again the night-birds twittered, and the meadow brook sung its evening song. These two, in all this, saw and heard naught but love. They had been sitting a while in silence, their hearts too full for words, when they saw Mrs. Livingstone coming up the drive from a visit to a sick neighbor

"Mother," called Caryl, "please come this way."

Then they made a place for her between them on the rustic seat, and told her their story. In her beautiful smile and loving eyes, they read her approval.

"May God bless you, my children, and may he spare us to one another and to those less favored till our work is done!"

Then she kissed them and went in to sit with Mr. Livingstone. He was waiting for her as in the days gone by, standing in the doorway, looking out upon the moonlit meadow. Folding his arms about her, and looking yearningly into her eyes, he said:

"Lucretia, darling, God is good. You came so near going for Caryl's sake, but you are here to bless him and Irene in their new love and noble purpose."

And the night-wind through the trees blew soft and low.

CHAPTER XV

ACCORDING TO THE SOWING

SINCE that evening at Maple Grove a year has passed. From the seclusion and quiet simplicity of a country home the scene changes to the gayety and sumptuous brightness of a city residence on a wedding-night. Guests are assembled in large numbers; for Caryl Livingstone and Irene Gregory have a host of friends; and all of them give one verdict: "If ever unions are made in heaven, this one was." They feel that his life will be one of large usefulness, and that, in all the range of their acquaintance, none can be found better fitted than she to help him attain his high ideals. In the presence of this appreciative and cultured company, Caryl and Irene "pledged their faith either to other." Many and hearty were the congratulations and the wishes for success and long life. Yet not all were able to understand his choice of working in the slums of Chicago—a service which had no promise of honor, no suggestion of comfort or congenial association. Horace Thornton remarked to his

mother: "If I could n't find anything better than that, I'd quit!" But it most certainly would afford opportunity such as these two people sought. Gladly would they give of their own culture and refinement to make the light shine into desolate homes. Great consolation, during the succeeding months, found its way, at their hands, into lonely hearts. Friendships were formed that not many of earth would prize. But they were such as few vicissitudes of fortune could break. For they had their foundation at the bottom of the social ladder, and did not depend on class distinction. But because of Caryl and Irene, children smiled, women prayed, and men forgot to curse and drink. It was a time long to be remembered in that district of the great metropolis. Afterward, when it was only a memory, people saw in their dreams two messengers of light, sometimes together, sometimes apart; and they were going up and down those wretched streets, entering abodes of poverty and sin, watching over sick children, administering medicine and consolation to dying mothers, kneeling beside drunken fathers, carrying out the dead, and doing countless unknown and unthought-of deeds in the name of the Christ. What a marvelous hold on hearts they had gained during that brief period!

It is again June, and excessively hot in the crowded part of the city. A year has passed since their happy marriage, and twice that time since the

night at Maple Grove, when they talked of love, with the moonlight struggling through the maple branches. Now, far away to the west, they sat very near together in two cozy rooms they called home. They were reviewing other days. For the time they forgot the noise and confusion of the street, and the moonbeams slanting between the tall buildings, and again were side by side swinging in the hammock under the trees. It was cool there; for the breeze blew up the valley, and set the leaves to softest music. It was quiet there. Save for the low song of the meadow brook, the stirring in the trees, the chirping of the crickets, and the distant croaking of the frogs, or the lowing of the kine upon the hillside, not a sound broke the stillness. Love was there, and always had been. No brawling, fighting, drinking, or cursing! Rest was there. One could retire at night and be lulled to sleep by the song of evening. And there was no thought of being called out from slumber by drunken carousals. There was so much room there, and would be such hospitable welcome. It was a picture to dwell upon, and one toward which they often turned from the toil and weariness of their present situation. For to them the world revolved around Maple Grove. So easily they might have left all and gone thither. They would only have to speak the word. But would they go back? Not they. Something drew them more strongly than the breath of the forest

and the murmuring of brooklets; for in that noisome district souls were being wrecked, and the cry of the lost had in it power to hold them.

So the letters sent back to Maple Grove had naught of repining in them, but expressions of gratitude for the unbounded privilege of planting flowers in people's lives. His mother would sit by the window and read these letters. And those who have done a work like hers can guess her thoughts. It is certain that she did not reproach herself for a lack of exhaustive knowledge of the early poets, or inability to discuss with authority modern fiction. In these respects she was inferior to some others of her day. But in her heart there was sublime repose in the thought that back there, at the crossing of the ways, she "was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." She had put her work in where it told. Now she rejoiced. Sometimes she would say to Mr. Livingstone that, if nothing more had come of her efforts than that one year in Chicago, she ought to be thankful. Then, when she thought of her other children, every one of them doing active service to right human wrongs, and Caryl himself soon to represent them in a more distant and destitute land, and of the probable years ahead of them before their work would be done, her heart was full. Although she had been obliged to let all of them go beyond her care, and most of them miles

away from their childhood home, she was coming to feel a larger joy than ever she had known before.

Yet she realized than many women, who had tried as faithfully as she, had not met with the same outward success. In spite of heroic and seemingly wise devotion, mothers and fathers had mourned unworthy sons and daughters. Some women, too, had entered an unequal conflict with incompetent or dissipated husbands. So, in her mind, there was naught of self-complacency, only humble gratitude.

She was past threescore years now. Personally she had not filled a very large place. Yet, if she had foreseen the results forty years before, she could not have chosen better. In her children she was many times multiplied, and was felt for good in unheard of places. Although, as has been indicated before, her early years were so circumscribed in activity as to occasion lament among those who recognized her capacity, there came a time when people who had criticised were silent with wonder. Neighbors and friends, who, during all those years, had apparently taken little notice, except occasionally to censure, began to see what this woman had been doing. The one who had once opposed a college training for farmers' children remarked, with some astonishment: "Look at that large family, and not a black sheep among them!"

"Do you wonder, with such a mother?" was the comment of his friend.

"No, and yet it does not always come out this way."

"But it would oftener, if all mothers were as faithful as Mrs. Livingstone has been."

"No doubt about that," said the first speaker; "and I think some of us have been better fathers and mothers from seeing her earnestness. And there was much other work that she could have done so well."

"That only emphasizes the importance of the work she did do."

Some thought it of sufficient interest to seek an explanation. And Mrs. Livingstone was requested one afternoon to speak to the club women of the village, and tell them how she had managed so successfully in training her boys. The results were in marked contrast with those of some other mothers. She complied with the request, though she had not much to say. She had lived her triumph better than she could tell it.

One dreary March day, near noon, a sleigh, carrying a woman clothed in sealskin and wrapped in robes, stopped at the stile. Mrs. Thornton was admitted to the cheery sitting-room and seated by the fire. For some reason, at that time unaccountable to her, she had passed another fearful night of restless tossing and troubled dreams. Some grim

specter seemed haunting her through all the long hours. Consequently she sought Mrs. Livingstone. She was gray and wrinkled and bent, old before her time. The women who, twenty-five years ago, used to peep from within their humble homes upon Mrs. Thornton behind her handsome blacks, and wish themselves in her circumstances, would not take the trouble this bleak day to rise from their warm fires, for they did not care in the least to exchange places with her. Since last we looked in upon her elegant but wretched home, the shadow over it has grown blacker. Though she seldom makes an effort to get out from under this cloud, occasionally, when it is unusually dense, she drives out to Maple Grove, to sit in the cheer of Mrs. Livingstone's home and meditate. The subject of her thoughts at such times would not be difficult to imagine.

During Margaret's life, Mrs. Thornton's anxiety led her to a partial disregard of Horace's career. And, in the days of deepest mourning and of pilgrimages to the grave, she had given Horace even less thought than before. When, at length, she came to know that she had not buried all of her sorrow, she awoke to a great living death that henceforth, for a time, was to cause her exquisite torture. The uncomfortable suggestions of that night of suspense, with her daughter away in the city, and Horace and his hilarious companions in the smoking-room up-stairs, were but a forecast of in-

describable sights and sounds through dreary years. Mr. Thornton's habitual absorption in his profession prevented his taking any heroic measures toward reformation. If, however, both had been disposed at that time to give thought to the needs of their son, how hopeless would be the task! During those days when he used to stand at the gate and long for his mother's companionship, he could have been guided. But at that time she had far-reaching plans for self-culture, and was preparing for a career of large usefulness. She had lofty ideals of woman's capacity for social and intellectual attainment, and bent all her energies to that ambition.

Sitting there in Mrs. Livingstone's home, and looking back upon the bright days of her own early life, she saw what a seemingly large place she then held. And looking upon all the years that had followed until the present, she saw how, in proving false to the most sacred trust committed to her, she had filled a continually diminishing place, until now she was accounted of very little importance. On the other hand, Mrs. Livingstone, beginning in so small a way, but being heroically true to her trust, had filled a continually enlarging place, and was now honored for the greatness of her work. To Mrs. Thornton the contrast was distressing. And the howling of the March wind about the house only added to her torment.

Previous to that first anxious night after Mar-

garet left, her mother would not admit any alarm on account of the brewery in the village. Sometimes she had recalled Mrs. Livingstone's frightful illusion of lost men and women. But she put it away with the persistency of those who obstinately refuse to acknowledge approaching calamity. She might easily have understood that her boy was in danger, but she would not listen. She had not time to hear. Now, from necessity, she was taking time to consider, not what threatened her son, but what was already ruining him. An extravagant method, indeed! For in saving a little time at first, she had, later, lost years of large opportunity. But that terrible night she had begun to realize that Mrs. Livingstone's vision was more than a fancy. The sounds of breaking glass and of coarse laughter were sufficient proof. The yawning throat of the brewery was a horrible fact from which she could not get away, and she saw that its presence in the beautiful village meant something awful for her. In her distraction over Margaret she could only sit and await results in the case of Horace.

The developments were startling. From the billiard-table and a game of cards with a few convivial friends in his own home, to the gambling hall and gilded bar-room with their alluring associates, and, finally, to protracted and mysterious escapades in neighboring cities, were easy steps. At first, Mr. Thornton thought little of it.

"Most young men are wild," he once observed to his wife. "We can hardly expect our son to do so much better than others."

"But he has been wild long enough, James."

"Do not be anxious," said he. "Time will change him."

And it did; but not in the way his father anticipated. When at length this man awoke to his mistake, he was inconsolable. In a remarkable way he had managed, apparently, to shake off responsibility for Margaret's wrong-doing. But when his only son, the one who was to bear the family name and bring honor to it, brought only ignominious shame, he came to share his wife's burden.

In early manhood he had built much upon the distinction to which, as a lawyer, he himself should rise, and the higher triumph that should come to his son. When he saw his hopes fall in ruin, he lost interest in his own profession, and let go much that he had already attained. To add to the dismal situation, during the first years of Horace's wanderings, frequent demands were made upon the father's bank account to get the son out of trouble and save the family reputation.

But Horace was shrewd. Though a frequenter of the bar-room, he was there to practice his cunning upon others, rather than to be duped himself. He occasionally took his wine, but he prided him-

self on knowing when to stop. So that he became a terror to some of the homes of the village, for the ruin he wrought upon unsuspecting victims. He was a sleek, smooth-tongued, suave-mannered young man, with black eyes that were not easy to understand. The unwary admired him for his fine features and elegant dress, and felt honored by acquaintance with Lawyer Thornton's son. By his cunning it was not long before he had all the money he needed, without calling upon his father. But woe to his method of obtaining it! His long absences from home occasioned some comment. People were led to believe, however, that the interests of his business took him away; though they never felt free to inquire too closely into its details. A few strongly suspected irregularity. This much they knew, that the presence of a large concourse in any great city called Horace Thornton thither. So that he went to New Orleans, St. Louis, Denver, San Francisco, Chicago, or New York, as conditions favored. And it was pretty certain that his return each time added considerably to his revenue. How many young men were entrapped by his wiles upon these various occasions, one may only conjecture. When Mrs. Thornton came to realize what her son was doing, how his commanding but wrongly-directed capacities were many times counteracting the little good she had tried to do, she

could have cursed the day of his birth. Rather should she have cursed the day she spurned the scepter of motherhood, thinking to wield one of mightier power. Mrs. Thornton saw it now. And she wondered the more at the wisdom that had led Mrs. Livingstone to her surpassing triumph.

CHAPTER XVI

THE STING OF THE ADDER

THAT March day, as on previous occasions, Mrs. Thornton sat in her friend's home, saying little and thinking much.

"Margaret is dead," she said at length, rousing herself. "Horace is worse than dead. He left for Chicago night before last. God only knows how many mothers' sons will go astray in consequence." And she looked wearily toward the fire.

"Once," she continued, more to herself than to any one else, "I was able to call him home, or take him by the hand and lead him back. Now all my entreaties do not bring him to me. Once I had him, and probably could have held him; but I failed to see my opportunity. What is before me, no one knows. It certainly can not be much harder than it has been, though I have a strange and fearful dread that his worst is yet to come."

And the leaden sky without and the increasing sullenness of the wind seemed to emphasize her foreboding. Even Mrs. Livingstone shared the feeling of impending disaster. But she prayed in

silence, "If it be possible, let further sorrow be stayed."

It was past the middle of the afternoon. By this time the wind had risen to a gale. The bare branches of the trees were rattling noisily against the house. Darkness was settling everywhere. A certain weird and ominous something seemed to fill all space. Mrs. Thornton was urged to stay till the storm was over, but just at its height she felt impelled to go, and ordered her carriage. The war of the elements was nothing. A far more terrific battle was raging in her heart. She did not understand the reason for such unusual distress. But so it was, and she must go. Passing through the door, she turned upon Mrs. Livingstone a face so pitifully pinched and drawn, so suggestive of approaching calamity, as to come into that good woman's dreams at night. In consequence, Mrs. Livingstone was not altogether unprepared early the next morning to see Mrs. Thornton's coachman again at the door with an urgent request that, if possible, she return with him at once to the village. No questions were asked, and nothing was said in explanation of this unusual message. But the ride was quickly over, leaving Mrs. Livingstone in the presence of her distracted friend. A glance at Mrs. Thornton assured her of the worst. Scarcely a syllable passed between them. Vocal expression seemed mockery. Feeling was too deep, pain too

intense for words. Silent sympathy was all she could give. A telegram from Caryl placed in Mrs. Livingstone's hand explained the situation. It had been received by Mr. Thornton the day before from Chicago, and read as follows:

"Horace injured last night. Come at once.

"CARYL LIVINGSTONE."

Mr. Thornton left on the evening train. Now she must await word from him before she could know the full import of that startling message. Although neighbors and friends called to comfort her, she felt that she must have the sustaining influence of Mrs. Livingstone.

Later in the day, upon receipt of the fatal intelligence, Mrs. Thornton accepted it as one benumbed beyond feeling by continually-increasing disappointment and sorrow. Had this storm beat over her with even greater fury, it scarcely could have produced deeper anguish. She could only bow beneath the blast.

Two days before, at three in the afternoon, the keen-eyed, handsome Horace Thornton had stepped briskly from the palace-car of a through train in Chicago, and, ordering a carriage, had ridden hurriedly to his hotel. The hours before dinner were spent in business conferences with several associates. Later in the evening he was at liberty to stroll into the street and seek amusement according to his

inclination. All he sought that night was companionship with congenial fellows. At the races next day he would practice his usual schemes. It was now ten o'clock. Walking past the electric lights in the softly-falling snow, Horace Thornton was an attractive figure. He was faultlessly dressed, and carried himself like a conqueror. Presently he stopped on a corner, within the brightness pouring from a gilded saloon. It was a popular resort, and many young men of aristocratic families were going in and out. He had often been there before, and now he frequently nodded in recognition of familiar faces. Still he did not enter. He seemed awaiting the arrival of some one. At length, aroused by a well-known whistle, he turned and grasped the hand of a friend.

"Hello, Jerold! So you're here at last? Let's go in and have a game."

The doors opened to admit them, and shut again. And the world outside was streaming up and down the broad street, all unconscious of the progress of events within. The hour grew late. Conviviality ran high. Horace Thornton, leaning over a table, glass in hand, was disputing with Jerold the outcome of a game of cards. Others became interested, even taking sides. None of them dreamed of the awful result toward which the altercation over the wineglasses was tending. From the sounds of merriment within, passers-by might have sup-

posed that the utmost jollity prevailed. But words were becoming hotter. Faces turned red with anger. Suddenly, "bang!" a shot was fired! Then a shriek, a heavy fall, and Horace Thornton lay moaning upon the floor. The wildest consternation prevailed. No one knew what to do. Outsiders, hearing the report, rushed in, others following.

"Stand back, men! stand back!" shouted a tall young man, entering the door, and pushing his way through the crowd. And Caryl Livingstone bent over the unfortunate victim. Earlier in the evening he had been summoned to the bedside of a mission-worker in the neighborhood, and, passing this resort, had seen Horace and his companion enter. But his errand was urgent, and he hurried on. Returning two hours later by the same street, he was startled by a revolver shot. He thought instantly of Horace, and ran the length of the block, to find others equally alarmed, pouring into the saloon. Forgetting his own risk, and joining the crowd, he realized his fears in the prostrate form of his early acquaintance.

"Bring some water, quick!" said he, meanwhile supporting the young man's head, and holding a handkerchief against the wound.

The remorseful murderer made no effort to escape, but willingly surrendered to the police, whose presence helped to restore order.

"Some one call the ambulance!" said Caryl.

It quickly arrived, to bear Horace to the hospital.

"How is he?" anxiously inquired Caryl of the surgeon a few minutes later. The doctor shook his head.

"If this had occurred in Halstead Street," said he, "nobody would have thought or cared much. But it's a terrible affair. That Jerold Freeman is one of Chicago's society men."

"Yes, and poor Horace!" said Caryl, bending tenderly over the white face. "This will be a dreadful blow to his parents."

He had already sent the message to Mr. Thornton, and a note of explanation to Irene; for he had determined to stay by till the end.

Time dragged heavily until Mr. Thornton arrived. The doctors, though hopeless, did their utmost to prolong Horace's life for the sake of his father, who, after a sleepless journey, reached the hospital the next day. He was barely in time to look into his son's dying eyes, and read in them, as he thought, bitter reproach. Power of speech was gone, and the end was near. Though the father pleaded piteously for one parting word—a last message—for the suffering mother, he awakened no response. But he stood looking regretfully upon the face before him, long after it was cold in death.

One need not dwell upon the dismal return home, and the unspeakably sad funeral rites. But an-

other grave was made in the family plot, at the farther side of the cemetery. And another form awaited the resurrection. The snow was on all the hills along the Tioughnioga that day, when the body of Horace Thornton was lowered to its resting-place. And near by, underneath the white mantle, were hidden the flowers that would bloom in the spring, filling the woods with fragrance and beauty. Underneath adjacent mounds lay buried the hopes of early years. Never again should they rise to bloom in beauty. What ought some day to unfold in celestial loveliness was blighted beyond the power of future growth. Above these two graves Mr. and Mrs. Thornton erected monuments worthy of their social position. They planted flowers and shed bitter tears. Yet these could not atone for the terrible result to which their neglect had contributed.

CHAPTER XVII

HOME-COMING

It is near the last of June. Daisies whiten the meadows. Rains have laid the dust, and left the trees and fields glittering in the sunlight. Something unusual is on hand at Maple Grove. There is a yearning in mother's face waiting to be satisfied, and a light in father's eyes, eager and expectant. For days they have had one sole topic of conversation; and they have moved about the house with the vigor of other years. Great preparations have been in progress. The whole place has taken on new life. Windows have been opened to the sun. Additional beds have been put up in the attic and store-room. The culinary department has suddenly become abnormally active. Cookies, doughnuts, and pies, pressed meats, baked beans, scalloped potatoes, and Boston brown bread, are a part of the tempting array upon the pantry shelves. Tables, drawn out to their farthest length, fill the dining-room.

The day is at hand. Everything is ready. Mr. Livingstone with the family carriage, and Norman with the platform wagon, have gone to meet the

morning train. Such precious freight as it was carrying that day! How much its coming meant to the scattered members of the Livingstone family! There had been a certain joy in going out to try new conditions. There had been exhilaration in the thought of measuring powers with other people. It had been a means of growth and strength to shoulder arms in the world's battles. But now, having done this, to be able again to face homeward was compensation for years of toil. With light hearts and bounding footsteps, they turned for the time, from business and household cares, back to the scenes of their free and happy childhood. Lawrence, with his wife and children, came all the way from North Dakota; Charlotte, with her family, from Iowa; Leroy, with his, from Kansas; and Caryl and Irene from Chicago. They meet at the western gateway of their native commonwealth, and board the Empire State Express. But so eager are they that even the telegraph-poles appear unusually far apart. "A mile a minute" seems too slow a rate. Upon reaching the city, Constance from New York, with her husband and children, and Mary from teaching in Albany, joined them. And all "catch the homebound train" for the village. From previous experience, they know how to select seats, and are ranged along the left of the car, in order to view the deep valley, with its winding, silvery stream and the opposite hills.

When several miles out from the city, Charlotte's little Leroy looked up into his mother's face with such a satisfied air.

"I just love this train!" said he. "Do you want to know why?"

"Yes," said she.

"Because it is taking us to grandpa's."

Once, some time before this, a teacher had gone out from the village to visit relatives in Kansas. After a year she returned to her native town. Taking this last ride between the hills down into the Tioughnioga valley, she had a sensation of smothering. In contrast with the freedom of the plains, she felt oppressed by the heights about her. Not so these travelers. The sight of the hills made them breathe more easily. They were children coming home. Restraint was left back there on the prairies. They were free once more. Others in the car must have observed this fact, and possibly wondered a little at their unbounded joy. Some were on the way to New York, and some to London. But what was all the world compared with Maple Grove?

Mr. Livingstone and Norman were early at the station. They stood out on the platform, looking up the valley for the first sign of the approaching train. They hoped it would not be late. As last they heard its whistle. Soon in the edge of the village they saw the smoke puffing into the morning air, and then the

engine rolling over the shining rails, across the streets, up to the station. Exactly on time! It stood panting on the track as though conscious of having brought safely to its destination a priceless load.

"There's grandpa! There's grandpa!" shouted a chorus of lusty voices. And a crowd of boys and girls rushed pellmell out of the train and fairly besieged him. When he recovered himself sufficiently to speak, he declared that any two of them could make more noise than his eight ever did. He never saw such jumping-jacks! But he loved them, in spite of their unusual demonstration. Then, his own sons and daughters, how glad he was to see them! Though he did not say much, his eyes expressed his joy. At last they were loaded, and the two teams headed for Maple Grove. Such a ride as that was! Only one occurrence in any way marred its completeness. They passed Mrs. Thornton's stately old residence, and saw her thin, pale face looking out through the curtains. She barely nodded, but did not return their smiles.

Objects of interest were on every hand. Nothing seemed to escape them. All changes were noted. One man had taken away his fence; another had set out an orchard; while still another had built a barn. From their remarks no one would have thought any of them a college president, teacher, author, electrical engineer, preacher, or missionary. All were

again farmer boys and girls, talking over the minutest affairs of the neighborhood. The outside world, with its weighty problems, concerned men and women, not children like these. Their jollity was contagious. As they continued their ride they became conscious of being objects of amusement. Often they heard themselves enumerated: "Two, four, six, eight, ten," and up to twenty-four. But they only smiled and nodded, leaving these inquisitive strangers to satisfy their own curiosity.

They are now within a few minutes of home, and must have a family yell with which to greet those maples. So they set to work. After considerable effort, and a contribution from the genius of each, they succeed, to their entire satisfaction, and are only waiting the opportune moment to try their lung power.

Lilian and her mother, with two aunts and uncles, who had come the day before, were waiting expectantly in the sitting-room. Mrs. Livingstone had ordered a long white banner, bearing in evergreen the word, "Welcome," so suspended between the trees as to be the first object visible to their eager eyes, as they should look across the meadow from the adjacent slope. They were not due for at least half an hour. Everything was very still about the old place. Mother was trying to read, hoping to pass the time more quickly. Lilian had finished playing very softly, in memory of childhood days,

"Love at Home." She looked up at the clock, saying to Aunt Martha, "How long before they will come, do you think?"

Hark! such an extraordinary jangle of voices from the highway! Probably a load of gay young men from the village on their way to the Glen. They do not think it worth while to walk to the door, but prefer to wait till father and Norman drive in sight. Mother takes up her book. Lilian turns again to the organ. But, listen! Those boisterous fellows are surely coming up the hill. Their shouts are just under the maples:

"Razzle, dazzle, razzle dazzle,
Razzle, dazzle, dee!
Livingstone crowd from the
Wide prairie!"

"These are our folks," says mother, with sudden surprise. And more out of the body than in,—for she had questioned whether they would make the early train,—she leads the way to the side porch. Here they are, at last,—those whose coming she has so long awaited. Father drives up first, and Norman next, with vehicles packed full of the dearest faces. They do not wait to reach the stile, but come piling out over the wheel, in a grand rush for mother! Laughter and tears mingle.

"I thought I should see men and women," said she, with a radiant smile. "But these are my boys

and girls come back again." Just then, Leroy, dropping all his acquired dignity, went plunging and tumbling over the grass in a manner to set them all going in their old-time uproarious way.

Mother had not intended it, but in the word across the maples she stirred up all the "home feeling" within them, and set them shouting to their utmost. They had not meant to be so demonstrative. But that word, "Welcome" was such a message from mother! They were like victorious soldiers returning from battle, and shouting for their queen. And now, before she is aware, she is borne triumphantly at the head of a procession into the house, and placed in her arm-chair.

What has come over the place, anyway? Time must have turned backward. Surely, mother is young again; for the rooms are echoing the sound of childish laughter and the patter of little feet. Is she dreaming, or is it true that her babies are again about her? If so, she must look after the dinner, for the children will be hungry. No, no, mother; do you not remember? The dinner is already prepared. And see! these big boys and girls of yours have found their way to the bureau, and have come out with gingham aprons. Just give your orders, please; they shall be executed with dispatch. Yes, yes, of course; she understands how it is now. She certainly is not so old as to have forgotten. But such a sudden transformation of what has been so

quiet, into a house full of merriment and song, is enough to lead one to fancy a turning back to other days.

After some pretense at work in the kitchen, but a great deal more talking, these grown-up children come in to announce that dinner is ready. The fact is, Lilian had everything prepared before their arrival. All are hungry, and respond quickly to the invitation. How the family has increased since father and mother used to sit at opposite sides of the table, with their little flock about them! Then they numbered ten. Now they "see the table wider grown." Thirty-one sit down to dine. And their ages range all the way from one year to seventy. How glad those two dear people are this summer-day to gather the loved ones under the home roof! No one mentions it, but, evidently, they are not as young as they once were. Silver hairs have multiplied during the last few years. But that was a wonderful dinner. They ate and talked till they were satisfied, with no thought about the haying, the butter-making, or gardening. Work was forgotten for the time. The meal being over, the dishes were washed and replaced in the cupboard almost before one could tell what had happened.

But now all are wanted on the front lawn; for the artist has arrived with his camera, and is ready to take their pictures. The old home formed a background, the maple leaves a canopy over their heads,

and the green grass a carpet beneath their feet. Father and mother occupied large chairs in the center, with their children and grandchildren standing or sitting around in the form of a pyramid. All of them were supposed to smile. But the tender memories of other years and the prophecies of the days to come shaded some faces.

After this the company broke up into groups about the lawn or in the house, until milking-time. Then the older ones were interested in father's and Norman's choice dairy. The children sped away to the pasture, and soon dotted the hillside among the daisies.

The milking is over; and Lilian, just like her, brings out the ice-cream and cake. For she has not been superseded since her college days, when she carried off the palm for culinary excellence.

An invited guest on this occasion is Lenora Thompson, who thinks no one quite equal to Norman, and expects to live with him, shortly, in the house across the meadow.

Now the evening shadows are fallen upon Maple Grove. A program has been prepared after the former custom on birthday anniversaries. There are brief addresses, solos, and choruses. Whatever the theme assigned him, each speaker swings around to the subject of "Home," for he can not help it. So intense are their feelings as they stand before those two who made possible their happy youth, and

prepared them for useful manhood and womanhood, that they can scarcely say what they have in mind. They make plain, however, their great gratitude, and their determination to do by their own children as nearly as possible what was done by them. Most of them have been obliged to make their homes in cities, where conditions are often less favorable to symmetrical development. But they believe that home is where the heart is, and that, when father and mother are true to their trust, they can counteract, in large measure, unfavorable surroundings. The example of their own parents is a constant inspiration. Such were the sentiments they freely expressed.

At length it came mother's turn to speak. She referred to the scene in the grape arbor, and the crowning of Queen Dewdrop, years before, and contrasted her quiet life with that of some others, who had been privileged to journey over land and sea, and to visit noted cities, and behold the pomp of ambassadors and the crowning of kings. Then looking tenderly into the faces of her noble sons and daughters, with their happy families about them, she said simply, "But this is coronation enough for me."

Finally, under deep emotion, they close the evening with their favorite song,

"Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam,
Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home."

On going to rest, a gentle rain, as in their childhood, patters upon the old roof.

The next morning, with Lilian at the organ, they sang:

“When all thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I’m lost
In wonder, love and praise.”

The lesson read was the one hundred and twenty-eighth Psalm, portraying the blessings to those who fear God. Father’s comprehensive prayer was the very one he used to utter, with a few broken words of gratitude for “this home gathering.”

That night the neighbors were invited in. One of them said to a friend afterward, “I am glad they had so much joy that they let it overflow to us.” Another, a hard-working farmer, who seldom spoke much, said, “I just can’t get over the good time we had with the Livingstones!”

Without intending it, they occasioned considerable animated comment the next day when they walked down the aisle of the village church, headed by Mr. Livingstone. No wonder the pastor preached with unusual power. Such an infusion of family religion all at once was enough to put new spirit within him. After the service, he smilingly addressed Mr. Livingstone as “the patriarch,” saying, “A few such men as you in every community would revolutionize the Church!”

The day for good-bye came too soon. All but Caryl and Irene must return to their work. There was not as much exuberance in the farewell as in the greeting. A very different feeling was manifest. There was no tumbling over the carriage-wheels to see who should be off first, but an orderly and very reluctant mounting by the steps, as though feet were loath to turn again from this short holiday into life's busy paths. Finally, when all adieus had been said, Leroy called out:

"Wait a minute! Let's sing, 'We'll never say good-bye in heaven.' Ready."

"We'll"—they began, but could go no farther. Then they looked appealingly to Mary. She had great self-control. If she would lead, the rest could follow.

"'We'll never,'" she sang, with unsteady voice, then stopped. No one had joined her. Constance's husband was then suggested. Surely he would be able. He was not influenced by such tender memories. But he could not utter even one sound. It was of no use. The song had to be given up.

"We must go," said father, taking the whip and reins, "or we shall miss the train."

And the faithful horses, as though possessed of a feeling for the occupants of the carriage, moved slowly along the drive, out from beneath the maples, down toward the highway, Norman following close behind. Mother came out and stood under the trees.

There she staid as long as she could see a handkerchief waving or a hat lifted in air. They could not sing, but they could act their farewell. They saw her smiling with apparent bravery, but no one guessed how she felt. In a little they had passed beyond the edge of the farm and out of sight. Then she walked slowly back to the house. It was very quiet, and a little lonely. But Caryl and Irene, during the time of their stay, were to fill a large place in her affections, and leave with her pictures to dwell upon during the months to follow. But that morning, after taking her seat in the big arm-chair, she said to Lilian, "I am so glad I could see all the children once more."

Frequently throughout the day she would arise, and, going out under the trees, look wistfully and long across the meadow to the hill over which they had ridden away. It was as though her soul were hungry for them yet. Or, possibly, she had a message she would have given, but had refrained from fear of marring the joy of their home-coming. Just before the sun went down, she was out again, but this time with her face toward the west. She fixed her eyes steadily upon the glory through the grove, until she seemed to those looking upon her from the family room to have heard a call from beyond the sunset.

"Can that be true?" said Lilian, more to herself than to any one else. Caryl brushed the tears from

his own eyes, and went out to his mother. He took her tenderly by the hand, and said, "Come." Then they walked together in silence. Her thoughts were of those she loved, and were full of calm repose. There was only one disquieting suggestion. That concerned Mr. Livingstone. She knew it would be hard for him. And she doubted if he had the least suspicion of what was in her mind. Caryl's thoughts were of his mother. He recalled their walk under those same trees three years before. How strong she then seemed! He realized that now she was changed.

"Mother," said he, looking yearningly into her face, "mother,"—but he could go no farther. So he kissed her, and led her into the house. During the evening Caryl looked often from her to his father, wondering how that dear man could bear it; for she had been his earthly inspiration.

CHAPTER XVIII

TILL HER WORK WAS DONE

THE summer is passed. The haze is on the hills, and autumn tints are on the leaves. The mellow light of age falls softly upon the waning year. The exuberance of spring sowing and the joy of summer harvests are gone. The pastures and bare cornfields, the apple-laden orchards and nut-filled forest trees mark the approaching end of nature's annual cycle. It is a day in late September. Its solemnity is oppressive. Yet it is a day to make glad the heart of childhood; for children hear not the melancholy chord in time's autumnal chant. What to others sounds a minor note, to them brings rapturous joy. They catch the echo of coming Christmas bells. The frost that browns the hillsides and colors the maples deepens childish laughter and quickens childish feet. It is just such a calm and silent day as needs the merry ring of youthful voices to brighten thoughts. But at this time no children are in Maple Grove household. Nothing now awakens their footsteps. Yet quiet peace and contentment abide there. Upon two

within that home a hallowed light rests, not unlike that upon the landscape. Yet who knows but that life's autumn may linger gloriously? A score of years may yet be theirs in which to enjoy the rewards of faithful service. Certainly that is what the absent loved ones anticipate. They had ridden away that summer morning, a few weeks previous, fully expecting to come again, and find still

"A father's smile
And a mother's face at the door."

No other possible outcome was in their thoughts. To return and miss the welcome was an experience for which they were not prepared.

Afternoon wanes. The ticking away of the minutes means more than usual to the few dwellers at Maple Grove. But little time is left. The last words are being said. Mr. Livingstone is undemonstrative. Seldom are tears in his eyes; but they are there this September day. When, a few years before, Lawrence and Leroy left home for the West, he did not seem to mind much. But now that his youngest son is about to go so far away, it is different. He ventures little upon the subject, however, except to say that he never expects to see him again in this world. But Mrs. Livingstone, with a sublimity of courage well-nigh divine, taking Caryl's hands in hers, and looking calmly into his blue eyes, says, through her tears:

"This is indeed my largest joy."

"We will try not to disappoint you, mother." Then he forced himself to say, "When we come back we will plan another reunion, and then we will have something to tell you."

She smiled. He could not. How his career providentially led to a position of extensive usefulness, is another story.

The next day, on his way to the coast, he wrote to his brothers and sisters what might have escaped their notice in the joy of their brief visit home. These were the words that silenced laughter and dimmed their eyes in reading: "Perhaps I should not say it, but when I bade good-bye to mother last night, I thought I should not see her again."

As their vessel was sailing out of New York harbor, he and Irene watched the retreating figure of "Liberty Enlightening the World." They saw something behind that tall monument. Their own beloved land was also receding. But more than that was the home of their childhood. As they gazed with tear-filled eyes, they seemed to see the vanishing outlines of one who had summoned all her powers to give them a hearty farewell, and now was letting go her hold. They had hoped to find her there again. The rest of the children had scarcely thought of other possibility; and the suggestion from Caryl came with great suddenness. While still under the tender influence of his words,

there came a letter which, to their minds, confirmed his judgment. It was from mother. She had not been well for a week, though she hoped to be better soon. But, somehow, her words breathed such loving solicitude for her scattered children, and for the precious little ones in all their homes, as to seem to them, beyond doubt, a parting benediction. Yet the regular arrival each week of a letter from her hand helped to sustain the hope of her recovery. This forced expectation continued until midwinter. Then the home letters began to come from Lilian. It was evident what that meant. Then the weeks that followed, with no word from mother's pen! In all those homes were packages of her letters. To think that she had grown too weary to write any more! How quickly would they have gone to her! But that would not be wise. Better that the old home be quiet. Besides, so recently all of them had been there, and to go again at this time might only hasten her departure. With the coming of summer she might grow strong.

The days pass. Finally, Constance and Mary, being nearer, are summoned. The message which calls them is this, from father: "Do not worry, but you would better come." There was hope, and their presence might help her.

It is a quiet midsummer Sabbath. Lawrence and Leroy had arrived the night before; Charlotte was too ill, and Caryl was beyond the sea. Mr. Living-

stone, trying to gather strength for the conflict, is strolling through the fields, and, finally, to the farther side of the wood to her altar. She has not been there of late. But now it is sacred to him because of what it has been to her. He kneels before it.

Meanwhile at the house, in that upper room, under the maples, she improves an opportunity for which she has been waiting. Norman, Lilian, Mary, and Constance, with Lawrence and Leroy, are there. The utmost repose rests in her face. She can not say much. But, between the paroxysms of pain, she manages to give her message.

"Of course, you will deal very tenderly with father," she begins. "I need hardly say that. But he will need more than your usual consideration. For your sakes and his I would like to stay longer, but evidently my work is done. I could scarcely do more, even for him. So I will go first. After awhile he will come, and we will go to the Father and say, 'The children that thou gavest us are all in.'" Then she rested.

During this pause, Mr. Livingstone entered. A glance at her told him the truth. She was rapidly failing. That night, against her protest, he refused to leave her, but sat holding her hand and looking into her face until she "fell asleep." He recalled that night of agony years before, when God had sent her back from the shadows. Now it was her time to go. Her work was finished. He would not com-

plain, nor try to keep her from her glorious reward. Through Christ she had won an immortal crown. To this man, watching in the silent midnight hour her passage through the gates, "the land that is very far off" seemed to come near. For she had entered in to await his coming, and was now beholding the "King in his beauty."

The next day, to an anxious watcher in the Iowa home, a messenger boy brought this word: "Mother went home last night." It was expected; yet how could Charlotte have heart ever to go back and not find her there? She bowed in sorrow. Then remembering the life that had gone, she lifted the coverlet from the tiny face beside her, and, for the sake of the helpless little boy, and for His sake who had given her such a mother, she smiled and took courage.

One day afterward, relatives, friends, and neighbors, gathering at the homestead, heard the minister read that patriarchal utterance, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord," and Paul's triumphant song of immortality, "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Then was sung the hymn she had liked best:

"And I shall see him face to face,
And tell the story, 'Saved by grace.'"

Among those present are Mr. and Mrs. Thornton. They learn that day a new lesson of trust that

is to brighten a little their brief pathway to the valley. Even now they seem within its shadow, and are grateful for the light vouchsafed them at the last.

The place of burial had been chosen according to father's wish, on the southern slope of the neighboring cemetery, overlooking a winding stream, where he could see it every time he rode by. Some who did not understand had thought that the passing of such a woman would be the occasion of uncontrollable grief. They were amazed at the composure of Mr. Livingstone and his children. That very night, after the milking, he said with his usual calmness, "Let us have a song." While Lilian played and the others did their best, he sang her favorite hymns through without a break. Though always deeply sympathetic toward others in sorrow, he bore his own with remarkable fortitude.

At the time of Charlotte's first return home after that, she had kept saying to herself, during her long journey, "If I only could find mother there!" When the train reached the village station she looked out to see father alone in the family carriage, waiting for her; and she could scarcely greet him calmly. On the way up the valley he drove into the carefully-kept cemetery, saying, "I would like to show you where we laid her." She was sorry he proposed it, for she could hardly bear more. Yet with him there was not a trace of emotion. Stopping before the grave, they stepped out upon the gravel drive.

"I have everything ready," said he. "Here is my name, with the date of my birth. The children will only have to add that of my death. This is her mound," pointing to the one elevation marking the plot. "Just beside her is a place for me. The rest will be for the children."

Then they drove home. Charlotte could not have listened longer to such deliberate plans for her father's "narrow house."

At the time of mother's going he said little, but felt deeply. Once he remarked that he did not know how he ever could have stood it, except for the children. For their sakes he wanted to work a few years longer. But after that they noticed a difference in him. All his life he had had such a merry ring to his laughter. It was subdued of late. Though not despondent, but full of hope, he little more than smiled. They even fancied that he was constantly listening for the sound of a voice. Frequently they heard him softly sing:

"I know not the hour when my Lord will come
To take me away to his own dear home!"

One evening, with a mellow light resting upon the valley, he sat by the window watching the lengthening shadows over the landscape.

"Well," said he, "I do n't know but I shall be glad when I get through—my work all done."

Often after that he expressed the same thought.

Those who heard him say it, would force back the tears, and wonder if he saw the chariot coming. They used to say of him in those days, "Father is perfect," though such a thought never occurred to him.

With reference to her who had gone, compensations were not wanting. She had left this message with the neighbors: "Tell them I shall be looking for them."

Different people had expressed themselves thus: "I count my turning to a better life from Aunt Lucretia's death." And, standing before her picture, those left in the homestead would say, "She staid till her work was done." Yet, when the months and the years went by, Lilian would sometimes say, "It seems as though I must see her."

They did not know it at the time; but riding away that morning after the last reunion, when they saw their mother under the maples, they were looking upon a picture that was to linger long and hang bright upon memory's wall—a picture with a background of green pastures, abundant forests and yellow grainfields; but in the foreground a woman whose love never failed, whose patience never wearied, and whose faith and hope never died. Long after that woman had gone beyond the sunset she seemed still to linger, giving noble incentive to worthy sons and daughters.

And that other face grew brighter with the years

—the face of him who had walked beside her with never-faltering fidelity and tender loyalty. She had been able to reign in her kingdom, because he had kept that which was committed to him; and for what he had been to her and to them, they loved their father with increasing devotion. It was beautiful to see with what tender regard Lilian cared for him, and with what appreciation and pride he would present her to any stranger who happened to call: "This is my daughter Lilian."

In his young manhood and early married life, he had played much upon a violin, which had been given him by his mother on condition that it should never be used to lead the dance. Often neighbors would sit in their doorways at nightfall and listen to the strains of some quaint air, sounding through the valley under his deft touch. After Mrs. Livingstone passed away, however, for several years, the violin-box was securely shut. But when the time drew near for him to go to her, he took out his instrument once more, and, day after day, his eyes being dim, his ears dull of hearing, and his voice no longer able to repeat the familiar melodies, he would play the old songs, and sometimes Lilian would sing. To her his playing seemed to wake the echoes of other days. She would see herself a little girl again, sitting with the others at her father's feet; and, best of all, the eyes of her mother beaming kindly on all of them. So these two, the father, whose work was

almost done, and the daughter, who was giving her life in self-forgetful service, comforted each other. It was a benediction to see them.

The altar still stands in the forest, though some of its stones are out of place, since she used to kneel there. The wavering leaves of the maples still cast their shadows about the old home. It is still true that

“The grass in the orchard is much more green
Than most of the grass you see.”

But more enduring than verdant fields or towering trees and builded stone is the character in her children. So, while the ever-constant landscape may breathe a note of sadness to those who, listening, hear not her voice, yet faith, hope, and love rise triumphant, knowing that, beside the River of Life and underneath the tree whose leaves are “for the healing of nations,” she has her crown, and awaits the coming of those whose footsteps follow hers.

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